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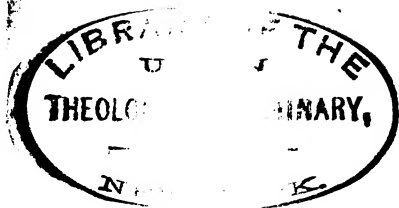
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# True politeness

François Demore







# TRUE POLITENESS.

*A LITTLE TREATISE ADDRESSED TO RELIGIOUS*

BY THE

ABBÉ FRANCIS DEMORE,

*Honorary Canon of Marseilles, formerly Superior of the  
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FROM THE FRENCH,

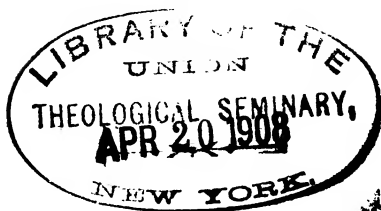
BY A VISITANDINE OF BALTIMORE,

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# TRUE POLITENESS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### DEFINITION OF CIVILITY AND POLITENESS.

ABOVE all, it is necessary that we should form a just, formal, and exact idea of things. In default of this precaution, we expose ourselves to speak much and to say little.

Attention is imperative, therefore, from the very beginning as to what is to be understood by the words *civility* and *politeness*. The dictionary and experience will teach us.

Civility and politeness essentially consist, if I am not deceived, in a kind way of dealing and conversing with others in society. They are, then, the expression or the counterfeit of social virtues; the expression if true, the counterfeit if false.

## 6 *Civility and Politeness: Definition.*

Observe attentively the difference between the one and the other; for, as you know, there do not exist two terms precisely synonymous. There is, therefore, a difference between civility and politeness, a sort of gradation from the first to the second. To be polite means more than to be civil. A polite person is necessarily civil; but a person simply civil is not polite. Politeness, therefore, not only supposes civility, but adds to it. The latter is by communication with men what public devotion is in regard to God, an exterior and sensible testimony of the interior sentiments that ought to animate us; and even in this it is precious as inspiring exterior deference and kindness. It is an open confession of the esteem and benevolence that ought to reign within.

Politeness adds to civility what fervor gives to public devotion: namely, the marks of a more effective piety. In the former case, it is indicative of a more expansive benevolence, a grander forgetfulness of self-interest, a greater devotedness to the neighbor, with a nature or disposition more occupied with others' weals and

woes, more refined and more exquisite. Hence it is more difficult to acquire politeness than to possess mere civility. The latter is a ceremonial that has its conventional rules, which we cannot divine, but which are, so to say, palpable, and to discover which a little attention suffices.

Politeness, on the contrary, consists in doing nothing, in saying nothing displeasing to others; in doing everything, in saying everything pleasing to them, as far as conscience permits, and this in such a way as to express one's self cleverly in an easy, engaging, affable manner without affectation. It supposes culture of the natural qualities, perfected by habit, kindness, and sweetness; refinement of sentiment; delicacy to discern quickly what is suitable in our relations with various persons or circumstances; that pliancy of temper to make one's self all to all in as much as is according to the law of God; facility to enter into the dispositions and adopt the sentiments of those with whom the present occasion brings us in contact, and the power to stifle all that might be opposed to this.

For this reason even a simple peasant

## 8 *Civility and Politeness: Definition.*

may, after some lessons, become civil; but it is only a person of culture, one graced by education or possessed of the spirit of God, that can be really polite. Let us review the whole question: civility consists in care to avoid in manner, gesture, or words all that could shock or wound the neighbor. It is like a perfectly smooth surface. Politeness is a manner of comporting one's self, of speaking and acting, that is full of suavity and condescension. It is like a polished surface.

## CHAPTER II.

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CIVILITY AND POLITENESS.

WHAT are we to understand by the words *civility* and *politeness*? Just this, that if the first is a flower the second is the perfume. Let us explain by some examples.

It was not without reason that the saints so often compared the religious life to an ark. "What, indeed, is the world?" exclaimed, twenty years ago, a certain famous orator: "The world is a compact mass of self-will perverted first by original sin, then by baneful contact, and finally ending in depravity."

The world is agitation, trouble, conflict of human passions, jealousy, ambition, violence—all subversive of the whole mundane machinery. The world is a bloody arena in which combatants lend one another arms to hasten their death; in which

## 10 *Civility and Politeness: Difference.*

they tear one another to pieces with the fangs of backbiting; in which they kill by the contagion of bad example; and in which they poison by what are called pleasures and amusements. The world is an infected pool, whose pestilential vapors stifle all that love them; it is a land that devours its inhabitants; it is a stormy sea whose very calm is a tempest. In one word, it is the kingdom of God's enemy, according to the saying of St. Paul: "*Rectores mundi, tenebrarum harum.*"

But blessed be the Divine Mercy! In the midst of this deluge of iniquity arises a majestic ark, into which the divine Jesus conducts and shelters souls over whom He has special designs of perfection and salvation. This is the happiness granted you, virgins of the Seraphic Order. God, who wished to save you in spite of your weakness and who loved you with an eternal love, without any merit on your part, chose St. Francis of Assisi, whom you call your glorious father, to construct this ark. As in the days of Noe, incredulous men scoffed at the servant of God; but nothing daunted him. The cross of Jesus Christ

is the miraculous keel on which rests this edifice of grace; penance is the hammer that joins the various parts; charity is their cement; humility, the ballast; faith, its helm; hope, its compass; poverty, its riches; confidence, its purveyor; and the sweet image of Mary, its royal standard. Francis of Assisi enters and with him Clare. That sweet dove of whom the world was not worthy came there to sigh over the sorrows of the divine Spouse and to bring forth to the life of grace and perfection the thousands that have preceded you and whom this holy bark has conducted to the port of a happy eternity.

But in Noe's ark all had not received from heaven the same gifts, the same qualities, the same prerogatives. It might easily happen, then, that in the mystical ark of the religious life all would not practise in the same degree that civility and politeness so desirable and so necessary in communities.

For example, one is disobedient to the mother of novices—that is uncivil, since the most essential species of civility is that which commands obedience to superiors.

## 12 *Civility and Politeness: Difference.*

Another, without formally disobeying, obliges her to repeat the same injunction over and over—that is impolite, for true politeness requires obedience at the first word, at the first sign of superiors. Were we to think, though most erroneously, that the devotion of a person consecrated to God could be shown by wearing badly fitting or disorderly habits, and did we, in consequence, fail to repair the rents in our own, although the venerable old mothers of the Order so carefully put patch over patch on theirs—that would be incivility. Not to rise when our superior enters the room would be most impolite. To make a noise in the corridors, to walk too hurriedly and without precaution, would be uncivil; but roughly opening the doors, and thus disturbing the recollection of some pious soul, would be impolite. We meet a companion, and for fear of putting ourselves to any trouble we do not even make the prescribed inclination of the head, to adore Jesus living in her person—then we are uncivil; but when at recreation, though beholding all the virtues united under the habit of an aged sister, we do

not approach to inquire for the health of one so precious, we are impolite. I write to you on a scrap of soiled paper, in ill-formed characters and with miserable ink—I am a rude person; but if, though using suitable materials, I fail to conclude with some one of those delicate compliments which the heart inspires, I am impolite. A person puts his fingers to his mouth or his elbows on the table when eating—he is uncivil; but though observing the gravity, propriety, and modesty indispensable to the servants of the King divine, he does not sacrifice his tastes to those of his companions—he is impolite. To speak when yawning, to greet one's companions with a scoffing smile—oh, how disgraceful in the servants of God! Not to listen, to move restlessly in one's chair, while others are reading some pages of their own composition—oh, how uncivil! But if, after patiently enduring the reading, we have not sufficient humility to thank—we are impolite.

True politeness is something more refined, more delicate and exquisite, than civility. It, therefore, supposes less re-

## 14 *Civility and Politeness: Difference.*

serve of manner, more tact to discern the strong and weak points of those that surround us daily or whom we meet occasionally; more abnegation and self-renunciation; in a word, more charity.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF RELIGIOUS CIVILITY.

How happy we are under the law of grace! The children of Israel trembled at the foot of the mountain on which Heaven spoke to earth, and at the door of the sanctuary which was filled with the majesty of the Lord; but the whole of the New Law may be summed up in one word—love. Jesus proclaimed it by His divine mouth when He reduced the Commandments to *two*, which two may be still further reduced to *one*. His cross proclaimed it still more loudly, by as many mouths, says St. Bernard, as the adorable body of the sweet Saviour presented open wounds. His apostles proclaimed it throughout the astonished universe. His tabernacle everywhere proclaims it, since it is the masterpiece of His love. His teachings are only the history of His infinite charity; His

## 16 *The Principle of Religious Civility.*

ethics, or morals, only the sweet obligation of retracing them in ourselves as far as is possible; His sacrifice, only a perpetual memorial and a daily renewal of the infinite love that animated Him and that ought to animate us; His graces, only a means of arriving at charity, of increasing it in our heart, of perfecting it when it shall have attained its consummation in heaven. Charity, in a word, is the Alpha and Omega of the Christian and religious life. Everything comes to us from the charity of Jesus; all should return to Him through charity.

Charity is, indeed, the rule, the way, the end of all that is good. As there are in the world metals not only different in appearance but also in essence, so there are in society two sorts of civility and politeness—worldly civility and politeness, and that which is truly Christian and religious.

Worldly politeness is exterior; that of the Christian is part of the heart. Worldly politeness consists in formalities; Christian politeness is only the expression of real respect, humility, and charity. The world's charity extends not far; the Chris-

tian's goes out to all God's creatures. The world's can be learned only with long study and numberless lessons, frequently repeated and very often useless, as experience proves, when they do not form part of the curriculum of early education; that of the Christian, on the contrary, may easily be learned in three lessons.

The world's code loses every day, since the prestige of its authority is banished, and its high-sounding words, often empty and meaningless, have been replaced by the sublime teachings of faith; that of the true Christian, however, will endure forever, because based on the truth of the Gospel. Let us, then, as Christians and religious, try to preserve in our heart and in the hearts of our pious companions true politeness. We know its principle, God Himself, for He is charity. We know its nature, the expression of charity. We comprehend its extent, that of charity itself, which is universal. We appreciate its motive, the will and the glory of God. We esteem its end, a means of testifying, increasing, and perfecting in us charity itself. We are ambitious of its sweet rec-

## 18 *The Principle of Religious Civility.*

ompense, peace of soul and union of hearts, precious foretaste of celestial enjoyments! These words may, perhaps, sound paradoxical, but I do not hesitate to use them. Should civility and politeness disappear from the face of the earth to leave behind only the infected dust of uncouthness, coarseness, and egotism, then should this daughter of heaven be able to find an asylum among the servants of Jesus Christ. Servants of the Saviour! Do we understand all that is grand, noble, sublime in this title, and the full extent of the obligations it supposes? Servants of Jesus! Do we think to bear this title without being civil and polite? No, the consort of a king ought to know her dignity and support it by deportment befitting her rank. Hers must not be the low and vulgar manners of a simple peasant-girl. Everything in her—her gait, deportment, gestures, looks, words—must reflect the brilliancy of her diadem. We pardon many things in an ordinary maiden; we overlook nothing in a princess. And we—are we not royal! Has not the divine Saviour raised us above the dust of this world?

Has He not adorned our brow with the crown of His love? Has He not made us sit down among the princes of His people? “De stercore erigens pauperem, ut eum cum principibus.”

Let us then, in all things be worthy of God’s choice. Never let us, in any way, lower ourselves beneath our dignity. Though pride inspires pity when, like La Fontaine’s frog, it tries to inflate itself by speaking of those exterior advantages in which man’s will has no part: birth, wealth, beauty, etc., yet is it lawful and laudable, when it recalls and inculcates our duties: *Noblesse oblige*, justly said by our forefathers.

The religious life has its obligations. Is it not in their accomplishment that it has its truths, among which may be numbered civility and politeness? Never can we be called religious, if we refuse to subject ourselves to our rule. A person habitually uncivil can never be other than imperfect. All voluntary incivility committed by a servant of Jesus springs from some evil principle. Its existence the owner may wish to disguise from himself; but that

## 20 *The Principle of Religious Civility.*

existence is, nevertheless, an evident fact. It may be self-love, or pride, or love of independence, or horror of sacrifice, or obstinacy, or attachment to one's own ideas or to self-will; or it is the love of self, or sensuality, or perhaps frightful egotism. Deign, divine Master, meek and humble of heart, humble and obedient unto death, entirely sacrificed for us, "totus impensus ad usus nostros," to preserve us forever from these sad defects, the pests of religious communities, the venom of true piety, the poison of sanctity! Grant us, on the contrary, those solid virtues with which are possessed all others!

## CHAPTER IV.

### UTILITY OF LESSONS ON CIVILITY.

“How hard is this saying and who can hear it?” What! assert and maintain that we cannot be true religious without politeness, that incivility ordinarily denotes imperfection? Does not theology itself distinguish between faults against the law and faults of conscience? Is there not a very decided difference between simple defects and sins, properly so-called? For the future, will it be necessary for a poor superior, already crushed by the weight of responsibility, to be obliged to inculcate the minute details of good breeding, refinement, etc.? Must a mistress of novices, quite terrified at the bare thought of the important charge that is hers, have to train recruits to what is termed civility? Moreover, should we not in this case be obliged to add some long chapters to our *Customs*?

Let us reassure ourselves. All that will not be necessary; for we have infinite help in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Source of all good. All that would, perhaps, be necessary if the politeness that we so persistently recommend consisted, like that of the world, in pure ceremony burdened with a thousand formulas trifling and useless; but, thanks to the Lord, what we desire is something altogether different.

We have remarked that nothing is at all times more simple, more natural, and more elevating than true politeness. We could not undergo the vain tortures to which worldlings submit; we could not occupy ourselves with the childish details which the world teaches at so great a price, and the careful study of which ends most frequently only in a sad counterfeit. Ours will be simple, noble, natural, coming from the heart. Never shall we consider time lost that is employed in inculcating to religious the crying necessity of civility and politeness suitable to their holy state. Did God in the Old Law think that He lowered His infinite grandeur by tracing for us in Leviticus and in the Book of Wis-

dom a thousand precepts relative to the manner of behaving towards superiors, equals, and one's self? The Apostle of nations did not think he uttered useless words when with so much persistence he recommended to the first Christians to *honor one another*, mutually to support one another, to prevent one another by testimonies of kindness the most cordial. Did he speak to them a language too human when he conjured them to watch that all that was done among them should be according to the rules of the purest good manners and propriety? Did he fear to profane the name of the most beautiful virtue, in depicting to them, under all its phases, the duties of that charity which is *meek, patient, and kind*; which suffers all and which bears all; which never acts lightly, never criticises, never seeks itself in anything? No; neither did the beloved disciple, after having drunk long draughts on the Saviour's breast, after having penned the sublime teaching of His Gospel and recounted the eternal generation of the Divine Word, think that he dishonored his prophetic lips by repeating, till death, the

word *dilection*, which, in the vocabulary of the religious life, is closely allied with that of *civility*. The illustrious virgin of Assisi did not speak useless words, when she repeated to us, in her holy rule and precious testament, her advice on kindness. We have seen in the golden age of our holy Order, the seraphic doctor, the immortal St. Bonaventure, find in the midst of his greatest labors time to express to the novices the most simple rules of civility, by that mouth from which the astonished multitude gathered the least word that fell as an oracle of heaven.<sup>1</sup>

And in our day, even, have we not seen one of our own prelates, the most justly venerated Mgr. Devie, Bishop of Belley, devote the last moments of his life to writing a book expressly on ecclesiastic civility?

May it please God, then, that we never blush at pausing on a matter so important, although at first sight seemingly so useless! No, nothing is insignificant in defence of besieged places; the least

<sup>1</sup> "Speculum Disciplinæ," or "Mirror of the Cloistered Life."

bulwarks have their purpose. The bark of trees is not a superfluous excrescence, for the simplest envelope protects and preserves the sweetest fruits. Now, such is in reality the advantage of Christian politeness. We shall continue, then, to speak of it, and, after having shown what is to be understood by this most essential word, we shall see the means of acquiring it and of putting it in practice.

## CHAPTER V.

### NECESSITY OF ACCUSTOMING ONE'S SELF TO POLITENESS.

YOUR valued letter is before me, and proves a new incentive, if one were needed, to continue an exchange of thought on a subject so suggestive of good results. So long as gold is not separated from its gross alloy it resembles only a rough, unpolished, shapeless mass; so, too, with the gold of charity hidden in the heart. The sculptor polishes and repolishes the marble from which, by repeated strokes of his chisel, he is to make a beautiful statue. Why, on the same principle, do we not polish in our interior and exterior the image of Jesus, into whom we purpose to transform our whole being? The goldsmith touches and retouches his work, to make a vase worthy of kings. Why should we not give the finishing polish to every

part of the consecrated vase of our heart destined to enclose so often the God of all grandeur and holiness?

The housemaid scrubs, polishes, and repolishes the floors upon which we walk. Why do we not with similar pains remove from our conduct all that could wound or offend the eyes or heart of others?

Let our tongue be polite, since it is so often purpled with the blood of the Lamb without stain. Let our lips be polite, since they are the lips of the Church chosen to praise God unceasingly.

Our deportment should be polished, since the great King so frequently invites us to His table. In a word, let all within us and without us be polished, that it may announce our dignity and proclaim of whose court we form part. Let us divest ourselves more and more of the coarse habiliments of this world, to put on divine and celestial manners. Precious pearl of the diadem of the Church, remain shut up in the casket that will preserve your brilliancy; belong entirely to Jesus; do nothing, say nothing that He cannot approve

in you. Happy daughter of the immaculate Virgin, imitate her whom I shall soon propose to you as the model of Christian politeness. Disciple of the Patriarch of Assisi,<sup>1</sup> reproduce in yourself that politeness which he extended to all God's creatures. Men, the sun, moon, stars, the sea, birds, fire, even the wolves of Gubbio, he respectfully called his brothers and sisters.

Daughter of St. Clare and St. Teresa, copy in every detail these two mothers, whose letters are stamped with the seal of modesty and charity, of that nobility which they breathed in all their conduct. Finally, religious virgin, always take for the rule of your conversation and deportment in general the advice of the great Apostle to Christian virgins: "Quæcumque sancta, quæcumque pudica, quæcumque amabilia." You ought to live, to breathe only purity, decency, chastity, goodness, kindness, uprightness, and modesty.

St. Francis de Sales, in his own peculiar and happy style, would have added: "The hares of our mountains are white, all clean

<sup>1</sup> Lines addressed to a Franciscan religious.

and pure, because they feed upon snow and thyme.”<sup>1</sup>

May Jesus grant you the grace of never finding your delight in anything but in Him and His holy will!

<sup>1</sup> “Introduction to a Devout Life.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF RELIGIOUS POLITENESS.

THE spirit of the world can penetrate everywhere, even into the most regular communities. It has been aptly said: "It is not the habit that makes the monk; it is not the walls that make the religious!" It is true that in the house of God all incites to the Lord. One lives there in an atmosphere of grace, which, so to say, seizes upon him, permeates him, purifies him, raises him to sanctity. But, alas, O Jesus! the angels sinned even in heaven. There is no fault of which others have been guilty that we ourselves may not commit; and, therefore, the great Apostle said to all: "*Let him that stands take heed lest he fall.*"

Behold three very precious advantages of religious politeness: it affords the means of expiating numberless faults; it is the

occasion of incalculable merit; and lastly, it serves marvellously to acquire and perfect all the virtues.

For your edification and instruction I will relate what I can recall of the pious conversation of a priest with whom I spent some days, and who is very near to me. "Permit me, my dear friend," said he, "to point out to you a means of salvation in which I have been for some years enlisted. You know my whole life, and without that charity which covers a multitude of sins it would make one fear. If I review the past, I tremble, and justly; if I look at the present, I humble myself to the very earth; if I think of the future, I bury myself in my nothingness. The past shows me only faults. The present unfolds to my mind's eye an almost complete lack of merit; for it suffices not merely to wish to do good. Good must be done, and, above all, be well done, which is something still more difficult. The future offers me the prospective of a Judge who has crowns only for virtue, which I have not.

"However, dear friend, though profoundly humbled and trembling, as once

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did St. Jerome, at the thought of the judgments of the Lord, I am far from being discouraged. Is it presumption on my part, or is it confidence founded on the infinite mercy of God, who desires the salvation of all, but particularly that of priests and religious? You may judge. It is nearly ten years since I made, under the direction of a holy man whom we still every day regret, a resolution very simple, it is true, but whose practice will prove, as I believe, an efficacious means of perfection. Like the unfaithful steward of the Gospel, I said to myself: What ought I to do that my Master may not take from me the management of the riches He has entrusted to me? 'Quid faciam?' I cannot go to work to till the soil, like so many indefatigable laborers who in the Lord's vineyard constantly bear the burden of the day and the heats: 'Fodere non valeo.' I am no longer able to endure privations, austerities, and humiliations, which are the true treasures of the religious life, because I am still too proud: 'mendicare erubesco.' But this is what I shall do to become every day less unworthy of a ministry

formidable even to the angels. I shall exert, nay, force myself to be very charitable, civil, and polite towards all, so as to make friends for myself who will one day open to me the eternal tabernacles. I said it, my good father, and from that day I have done it; or, to speak more exactly, I have tried to do it.

“I see Jesus Christ Himself in my *confrères*, and that so vividly that, if I did not fear to wound their humility, I should joyfully kiss their feet. In the men that I meet, I recognize St. Joseph and the apostles; hence you may understand that I could not be impolite to them, since they are all much better than I. With females I have few communications, but when necessity obliges some intercourse with them I try to see in them the Blessed Virgin Mary, that accomplished model of perfection. I treat them with grave politeness. Without their perceiving it, I cut short the interview and dismiss them as satisfied and edified as possible. If a beggar asks me for five farthings I give him ten, that he may bless the soutane. If the unsophisticated cook of the presbytery seeks and, in

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truth, finds every means of making me practise mortification the most consummate, I so dissimulate my disgust that she congratulates herself on her skill in catering to my tastes. I take my meal without drinking, if by accident I have no glass, for fear of letting the poor girl suspect that I have noticed her forgetfulness. If I walk, I do it so quietly that I do not disturb even the delicate ears of the mice, for I deem it rudeness to trouble any creature whatsoever with my miserable presence. If I must speak, it is never without fear of wounding the ears of my audience. If I must laugh, though I should rather weep, I am on my guard to do it quietly. The negative particle never has permission to cross my lips, except when I am in the holy tribunal. Apart from that, I say *yes* whenever I can do so in conscience. In the sacristy I always select, in order to relieve others and without their suspecting it, the heaviest and most worn vestments.

“In a word, I have so contracted the habit of civility, cordiality, kindness, and politeness that I consider myself as something of which every one has a right to

make use and devour. Happy should I be if in devouring me they consume Jesus, as they incorporate only Him under the eucharistic species!

“It is true, that this singular practice has often something very painful in it for a character like mine. You know how often one is intruded upon in the world; neither are you ignorant of all that must be suffered from teachers, porters, bell-ringers, choir-children, sacristans, organist, ladies and their chairs, from the discord of the choristers, who only know how to distract one by their theatrical singing. ‘No matter, my dear friend,’ I say to myself every day, ‘it is necessary for you to expiate your sins in some way, and the violence that one has to do himself in order to be polite towards all is for you, thanks to the Lord, a constant means of penance and expiation.’ It is well to acquire some merits beyond that which is of duty and rigorous obligation; and the care to satisfy every one in so far as conscience permits, furnishes me the means of refilling by degrees with tiny pieces the poor sack so frequently pierced. It is, in fine, necessary to acquire

and perfect in myself some virtues, since I should have them all; and this general, universal politeness constantly supplies the occasion of every day making some acts of it. Now, you know, it is five-and-twenty years since you said to me that, as it would be foolish to wish to fly without wings, so is it folly to wish to be humble without humiliations, patient without trials, meek and mortified without contradictions.”

Here I must pause, not to run the risk of betraying the name of the dear friend whose language edified me beyond expression. I envied his recital. I found it just, true, fitted to all temperaments, and I promised myself to make a good use of it.

To religious I feel convinced that this language will not be surprising, since it is in accord with their habits.

## CHAPTER VII.

### POLITENESS IN THE SCHOOL OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

EXACTITUDE is, they say, the politeness of kings. Why can we not also say that it is a part of the politeness of religious and priests, a truly royal race, as St. Peter styles them: “Regale sacerdotium”?

Pious children love pictures; therefore I offer you one, though not one of those pretty engravings which the religious papers so justly criticise, with their little hearts, sparrows, doves, lambs, flowers, and a thousand other gewgaws—true childishness, calculated sometimes to nourish only sensual devotion.

Thanks be to God, what I offer you is more conformable to the spirit that distinguished our fathers! It is a portrait drawn by St. Ambrose himself, the portrait of that august Virgin whom on the cross

the divine Jesus gave us for Mother and model. St. Catharine of Siena said that, could we see with the eyes of the body the moral beauty of a soul exempt from sin, we should be charmed to such a degree as willingly to sacrifice everything to preserve so admirable a beauty. Behold, then, the picture of her who alone possessed more grace and beauty than all the saints.

“May the life of the Most Blessed Virgin,” says the great Bishop of Milan, speaking particularly of Mary’s youth, “be continually written on your heart, and may she be to you a brilliant mirror, before which you can daily enrich your soul with the beauty of virginal modesty! May it be the constant rule by which you will compute your virtues! It is in her that you should seek examples for your conduct. She is an accomplished model of perfection, which continually teaches what to correct, what to practise, and what to avoid. But if, ordinarily, the greatness of the master stimulates the generous ardor of the disciple, you can nowhere find anything more noble than the Mother of God; nothing more august than she whom Di-

vine Splendor has chosen for His throne; nothing more chaste than the Virgin *par excellence*. Humble of heart, grave in speech, prudent in all her conduct, saying very little, and that little in a low, sweet tone, always full of consideration and kindness for the old, rising with sovereign respect at their approach, kind and attentive towards all, charitable to the poor, always employed in pious reading, she placed her confidence and happiness only in the prayers of the unfortunate, whom she relieved with unequalled charity. Throwing her whole self into every action that she performed, full of modesty and reserve in her words, she thought of rendering God alone the witness of her virtues, and thus she passed her life without shocking or wounding any one, wishing and doing good to all, shunning bantering and arrogance; in a word, she followed in all things the inspiration of reason, and she loved all the virtues."

I have only to add a last touch to this admirable picture, and it is St. Bonaventure who will furnish me with it.

"Among the seven special graces that

the Blessed Virgin daily asked of God in the temple, in which she dwelt from the age of three until the time of her divine maternity, the second was that of *loving and serving all her neighbors as God wished her to do.*"

If the great St. Ambrose so lovingly proposed the life of our divine Mother to those virgins of the first ages, am I wrong in proposing her as a model of that religious politeness which is nothing else than charity, mortification, and humility in practice? Am I wrong in saying to you that without this modesty, this reserve, this cordiality, this kindness, this behavior full of good breeding, those words teeming with sympathy, that pure conduct free from all coarse and imperfect alloy, you can never bear to the Blessed Virgin that blessed resemblance which ought to be your glory and happiness?

Do not, then, neglect any of the traits just retraced from the facile pen of the great bishop, and you will endeavor every day to reproduce them more perfectly in yourself; so that it may be said of you, as well as of your pious companions, that you are

all true daughters of Mary, of the seraphic virgins, the good odor of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the joy of the angels, the ornaments of the world, and that your holy convent is an anticipated paradise, a foretaste of eternal beatitude.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A FALSE MAXIM.

WHEN near the rivers of Babylon, we have often heard the doctors of egotism, whether male or female, repeating in supercilious and solemn tones the famous pagan saying: "Prima sibi charitas: Charity begins at home." God grant that we ourselves have not repeated it with implicit faith, have never made it the rule of our desires, affections, and preferences in our relations with our neighbors! The maxim is, indeed, true, when there is question of God's glory and our eternal salvation. Therefore, it is never allowable to tell a single lie, however slight, says St. Augustine, even if by a little untruth we could prevent maladies, wars, famine, pestilence, conflagrations, inundations; extinguish the flames of purgatory, as well as those of hell, or preserve ourselves and others from all the ills and sorrows of life.

Yes, this is true in a sense a thousand times more forcible than we can say, since in this lie, in this venial sin, whatever it may be, there is question of God's honor, which ought to prevail above every other consideration. Our cry should be, "Live God, if need be, to the destruction of all creatures!" for God alone is necessary. All creatures compared with Him are but pure nothingness, less than a grain of dust. "*Tanquam nihilum ante te.*" Live our soul! for what will it profit to gain the whole world if we suffer its loss? "*Quid prodest?*" But how differently things turn out, O divine Jesus, when there is no question of Thy glory or our salvation! When on one side of the scale there is only our own material interest, and on the other are balanced the desires, the wants, the satisfaction of our neighbor; when there is question of a service, an honor, a kind attention that we can render without prejudice to conscience, oh! then, do not hesitate. The maxim cited at the beginning of this chapter is no longer applicable. Our neighbor is better than we. He has a right to all that we can do for him. We should

care but for him for whom we have forgotten self, before whom we have abased, annihilated self. He must increase, we decrease in every way. He must be happy, honored, exalted, comforted at the expense of our honor, reputation, rest, ease, convenience—yes, of our very happiness; or, rather, we must make our happiness consist in honoring, assisting, comforting, serving him, entirely sacrificing self to him. In one word, we must exercise towards him, for God's sake, and in conscience, the least as well as the greatest duties of civility and politeness, confounding them with the duties of charity.

This doctrine is not mine; it is that of the divine Jesus, of the great Apostle St. Paul, the beloved disciple St. John, St. Francis de Sales, of all the saints whose lives were a perpetual commentary on it. It was the Son of God who taught it when, descending from the immeasurable heights of eternity, He deigned to humble Himself for us to such a degree as never for one instant to seek Himself. “*Christus non sibi placuit.*” It is St. Paul who teaches it when, his grand voice echoing that of Calvary.

he cries out to us: "Let each one have for his neighbor an affection and tenderness truly paternal. Prevent one another by all the titles and testimonies of honor and deference possible. In these sentiments, with utmost delicacy, always keep yourself united. Never raise yourself above others; but abase yourself beneath the lowest and, in the eyes of the world, the most abject; and incessantly labor to overcome evil by good." Again he teaches us when he says: "Render to each exactly what is his—tribute to whom tribute is due, honor to whom honor is due; in short, acquit yourself towards all of what you owe them." Be indebted to no one except for the love that we ought always to have for others, and of which we can never acquit ourselves. Finally, it is St. Paul again who teaches it when he concludes in these words: "Let each of you have all possible affection for his neighbor, and try to satisfy him in all that is good, after the example that Jesus Christ has given us; so that your modesty may appear before all men."

And you, O well-beloved disciple of the divine Jesus, tell us what you drew from

His adorable Heart when, at the Last Supper, you had the ineffable happiness of resting so lovingly upon it. "I shall say," replies St. John, "but little, for a weak mortal cannot sound the immense depth, measure the infinite height, tell again the ineffable extent of that abyss of tenderness and mercy; but this little shall be a complete treatise on charity, cordiality, and politeness. 'Nos debemus pro fratribus animas ponere:' He died for us, and therefore it is that we, too, should give our life for our brethren."

And who are our brethren? All men known and unknown, all the children of God, all the brethren of Jesus Christ, all whom the Blessed Virgin brought forth at the foot of the cross in terrible anguish and sorrow; and, above all, those whom our holy foundress brought forth to the religious life at the cost of so much suffering and virtue. Behold our brethren! our sisters, those for whom we ought daily to immolate ourselves with all our tastes and preferences. Hearken, you who desire to have every one occupied with you; you who find moles in the eyes of others and

do not see the beams that obscure your own vision; you who have to be implored to render a service; you who so willingly and adroitly throw on others all that is hard or painful to your miserable nature; you who would wish those in authority over you to divine your thoughts, foresee your desires; you who never find anything well done unless you have done it yourself; you whose mouth is closed when it should open to utter the praises of others, and whose own heart dilates immeasurably when you are spoken of; you who on many occasions prefer yourself to others; you who, secretly perhaps, consider yourself capable of filling the most responsible positions, while you know not how to subject yourself to the simplest rules of politeness. Would you give your life for your brethren? And, nevertheless, to renounce one's self in all things, to prefer all others to self, is the A B C, I do not say of perfection only, but of the simplest Christian and social life. Now, if this obligation of preferring every one to self concerned the first Christians to whom the apostles spoke because all were called to sanctity, consequently to the imi-

tation of Our Lord and His immaculate Mother; if this obligation, moreover, so sweet to hearts well disposed, ought to regulate all the relations that one has with his fellow-men, and which are designated under the general term of politeness—what must be thought of a religious who would glory in ignoring them, who would seek to elude them, and who would deride their practice?

## CHAPTER IX.

### POLITENESS OF THE SAINTS.

VERILY, an admirable prospect! In my last, I proved the sweet obligation we are under of making a thousand sacrifices whenever by so doing we can give pleasure to any one, and I proved it by unanswerable reasoning, by indisputable testimony, despite the sad maxims of egotism. To-day St. Francis de Sales will come to the front. He is the amiable doctor whose name is synonymous with politeness, and whose immortal writings, though submitted to the crucible, will produce only sweetness and charity. Behold how he treats the famous maxim by which all coarse and impolite persons, veiled or unveiled, mask their impoliteness. "Provided, my dear daughters," said he, in his "Conference on Cordiality," "that the love of God prevail over all other loves and always hold the

first place, we ought to love our sisters to the full extent of our heart. We should not be satisfied with loving them as ourselves, for the commandments of God oblige us to do this; but we ought to love them more than ourselves, in order to observe the rules of Christian perfection. Our Lord has Himself said: 'Love one another as I have loved you.' This is most worthy of consideration. 'Love one another as I have loved you;' that is, *more than yourself*. Our Lord has always preferred us to Himself, and He still does so as often as we receive Him in the Most Holy Sacrament, in which He makes Himself our food. In like manner, He wishes that we should love one another with such a love as always to prefer our neighbor to ourselves. As He has done everything that He could for us, except condemning Himself to hell, which He could not and ought not to have done, even if He wished, because He could not commit sin, which alone leads to damnation; so He wills, and the rules of perfection require, that we should do all that we can for one another except to lose our soul. That excepted,

our friendship should be so strong, so firm, cordial, and sincere as never to refuse to do or suffer anything whatever for our neighbor. Our affability should impart a certain suavity to all the business and serious communications that we have with one another, and good conversation should render us gracious and agreeable in our recreations and less grave intercourse with our neighbor.

“It was the custom of the early Christians to kiss when they met. Our Lord also used this form of salutation with His apostles, as we learn from the treason of Judas. Formerly holy religious, when they met, said, ‘Deo gratias,’ to prove the great satisfaction they experienced on seeing each other; as if they had said, or wished to say: ‘I return thanks to God, my dear brother, for the consolation He gives me in seeing you.’ Thus should we show that we love our neighbor, that we are delighted with him and all that he does, and this in a manner pleasing to God. We should laugh with those who laugh, weep with those who weep, and contribute with holy and moderate joy to the gracious

conversations that may serve for the consolation or recreation of others; so that we may never cause the least weariness by the coldness or melancholy of our countenance, much less by refusing to recreate at the time marked. Imitate St. Paul, who both wished and taught us to testify our affections holily. He gives us the example: 'Salute,' said he, 'such a one, who knows well that I love him; and such another, who ought to be assured that I love him as my brother; and his mother, in particular, who well knows that she is mine, also.' In a word, let us love our neighbor with the love of the heart, according to its full extent and as Our Lord has loved us, that is to say, more than Himself. Let us prefer him always and in all things to ourselves, in the order of holy charity, and never refuse him anything that can contribute to his benefit, excepting the damnation of our soul, as we have already said."

This language of the great bishop of Geneva will ever be the language of the saints, because the noble sentiments he so well expresses will always be the rule of their conduct. What is, in effect, sacred his-

tory, if not that of charity, the sole inspirer of religious politeness? Was he not a model of politeness, that great Apostle who would have wished to take upon himself all our miseries and, to make use of his own expression, not only to distribute all that he had to his neighbor, but even give himself to him entire—"Impendam et super impendar"? Was not he a model of politeness towards the suffering members of the divine Saviour, that admirable St. Vincent de Paul, when he ceased not to say: "Come, my brethren, let us with ever-increasing love serve the poor; let us seek the most abandoned; and let us acknowledge before God that they are our lords and masters"? Was he not a model of civility towards his neighbor, when he said incessantly: "O my God, should we not follow the example of the divine Master? Should we not always yield for the advantage of others? Should we not choose the worst and the most humiliating for ourselves, since such is assuredly the most agreeable and the most honorable to Our Lord?"

But why name particular saints, since

every one of them would reproach himself for the least incivility or voluntary imperfection as for a crime? No, they did not confine themselves to the strictly necessary; they aimed much higher. Their hearts, like a sweet flame, rose incessantly to God, and they ceased not to feed the fire of the holocaust. They were not satisfied with refraining from doing to others what they would not wish done to themselves; they did just the opposite. They did to others what they would wish done to themselves; or, rather, forgetting themselves, they thought only of God and their neighbor.

It has been wisely remarked that the harder they were on themselves, the more lenient and condescending they were towards others. Holy humility kept them in spirit under the feet of every one, and made them believe that they were unworthy of the least regard. Far from showing themselves exacting, they thought that too much attention and kindness were paid them; hence, they expressed profound gratitude for the least services. Nothing deterred them, except obedience, when there was question of obliging others, whomsoever they might

happen to be. Far from allowing a contradiction to chill their zeal, it sufficed for them to have a subject of complaint against some one, to show themselves more preventing and more charitable in his regard. When any one asked a service of them, they never allowed him even to suspect that they were fatigued. Relieving others always seemed a relief to them. When intrusted with some charge, they exercised it with so much sweetness, with manners so polished and gracious, that no one experienced the slightest difficulty in obeying them. When they commanded, one would have said that they were the inferiors. They never allowed any movement of natural humor to appear, no brusque sally or sign of antipathy, no difficulty in submitting, no repugnance to anything, whatever it might be. All was to them indifferent. Was it not the will of God speaking by the mouth of superiors? They were like doves without gall, incapable of bitterness or resentment. They found a thousand pretexts to deprive themselves, in favor of others, of the little reliefs offered them. They always sought the last place, and

whatever was meanest and poorest in furniture, clothing, and food. Their patience was proof against contradiction and the inevitable perplexities to be encountered in all human society, even in the most holy assemblies. They knew how to dissimulate adroitly all subjects of mortification, as well as the wrongs they suffered. It was only propriety and exterior modesty that gave evidence of the sentiments that embellished their noble souls. Thus, everything about them gained hearts without their thinking of it.

Let us renew our conviction of the sweet obligation we are under of being charitable and polite at the expense of all possible temporal sacrifices. Let us remember that to be holy we must be polite, in the least details of life, with the politeness inspired by charity and the spirit of faith.

## CHAPTER X.

### RELIGIOUS POLITENESS IS LEARNED IN THREE LESSONS.

HUMILITY, mortification, and charity form a divine mixture, a delicious balm, which cures us of impoliteness, preserves us from incivility, and perfects us in the practice of the duties imposed by Christian and religious courtesy. Be, then, humble, mortified, charitable, and you will soon be all that your heart desires; or, to say better, such as the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the divine Spouse, wishes. The more violence you do yourself, says the pious author of the "Imitation," the more you will advance in the way of perfection; and I tell you, the more you advance in humility, mortification, and charity, the more civil, polite, and cordial you will become, with that cordiality, that delicacy of feeling which ought to adorn a true Christian.

This assertion has nothing surprising in

it, after all we have said on this important subject. What, in truth, is humility, if not the practical knowledge of one's self? The truly humble soul, in sight of her miseries, annihilates herself before the Lord and before men. She is astonished that God, the earth, and the elements bear with her, because she is intimately convinced that she has sadly abused God and His creatures. She is rapt in astonishment at finding herself in the house of the Lord. She marvels that Jesus, so pure and before whom the angels prostrate, deigns to suffer her at the foot of His altars. She is astonished to find herself among the angels of earth, she who not long since was in the midst of its vile dust; in a word, she knows herself. *This is the first degree.*

The truly humble soul not only says that she is nothing, but she wishes others to think and act according to their intimate conviction of the same. She, therefore, follows to the letter the grand counsel: "Love to be unknown and reckoned as nothing: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari.*" If Jesus were to ask her what she desired in return for the little she had done for

Him: "Lord," she would answer with St. John of the Cross, "I desire only one thing, to suffer and to be despised for Thee: Domine, pati et contemni pro te." Far from seeking the esteem and glory of the world, she avoids it as a dangerous illusion; she suffers humiliation and contempt with unalterable patience, exteriorly and interiorly; she is not affected by the praise that is sometimes given her; she even takes pleasure, after the example of the great apostle, the seraphic St. Francis, and all the saints, in injuries and opprobrium; in short, she rejoices in being despised. *This is the second degree.*

The truly humble soul carefully distinguishes what is of herself and what is of God. She annihilates herself more profoundly than ever when she sees herself most honored and esteemed. Nothing elates her. She glories in nothing, attributes nothing good to herself; but, incessantly raising her heart and eyes towards heaven, she refers everything to God, the Source of all good. The proportion of her abasement is the elevation of her perfection. *This is the third degree.*

Now, I ask, could a soul such as I have just described fail in the politeness which the religious state requires of her? No; a truly humble religious will be polite towards her superiors and ecclesiastics, towards all whom the Order has raised to offices, and to her companions without exception. As she ever mistrusts herself, she will be on her guard, and very reserved about doing anything of importance without the concurrence of those who have received from heaven the special mission to govern everything in a community. As she is filled with submission for her superiors, she will receive with tender gratitude their advice and remonstrances and commands. Though nature asserts itself, she will not yield. And if sometimes superiors, either to try her or, it may be, to punish some infidelity, think it their duty to retrench some favor, far from insisting on retaining it, the humble subject will enter more deeply into herself, and will even render heartfelt thanks, esteeming herself happy at not being deprived of more. If the worthy father confessor, the innocent victim of her daily imperfections, in order to

fulfil his duty or to forward her advancement in the ways of God, addresses her in a manner a little drier than usual, or makes her some charitable observation, she encourages him by her gratitude ever to use in her regard the holy liberty his ministry gives him. If she is passed over in the distribution of charges and offices, she rejoices at being forgotten and regarded as the least and last. If, on the contrary, they overburden her with business, far from tormenting her superiors with incessant complaints, she esteems herself happy to see some sisters have a little relief at the cost of her own rest. If she is obliged by her position or force of circumstances to make some remarks, she will be careful to put them in the most modest form, weighing her words that they may resemble so many petitions. On meeting a companion, she is eager to prevent her, to salute her, to yield the right of way to her in an easy, ladylike manner, that expresses real respect. If she sees any one in need, she offers to render her the most abject services, and this with so much cordiality that she herself appears the obliged party.

If she has to make a request of any one, even the lowest in the house, she does it so humbly, so modestly, so submissively, that no one can refuse her. There is nothing that she does not observe through a motive of sincere humility. This is the case even in her observance of silence. The more she fears to occupy others with even the thought of her presence, the more careful she is to walk quietly, to speak in a low tone, to open and close the doors and windows gently, and to avoid all bustle and clatter in sweeping her cell, making the bed, arranging the rooms and corridors of the community.

I pause here. I leave to your tact and experience the completion of this simple picture. Imperfect as it is, it will convince you more and more of the truth of the words: "Humility is the setting of the stone."

## CHAPTER XI.

### COURTESY, THE DAUGHTER OF MORTIFICATION.

How many souls there are that never put one foot before the other excepting to go the wrong way ; that, far from advancing in the ways of the Lord, do nothing but wander away from them ! There was one such in the apostolic college ; and we know the end of that unfortunate, who began with slight faults and ended with Deicide. There was one among the seven deacons of whom St. Stephen was the glory ; and the name of Nicholas still saddens the Church. They are found, too, among the first Christians, and to them St. Paul wrote, weeping : “ You did run well : who hath bewitched you, that whereas you began in the spirit, you would now be made perfect in the flesh ? ” This same misfortune pervades the world ; and, assuredly,

it is not the least sorrow of our priestly hearts. This spirit is to be seen in the most illustrious Orders. In them we frequently find very slight breaches affording entrance to the spirit of the world, which eventually chases thence the spirit of Jesus and makes their foundations crumble. It is to be met even in the holiest houses; and frequently that melancholy tepidity, so revolting to the Heart of Jesus, has arisen from slight faults, voluntary and multiplied. Far be it from me to make allusion to any special community. But the Holy Spirit tells us: "There is nothing that has once happened which may not happen again; nothing new under the sun, nothing of which we are not capable."

With still more reason than that illustrious Maccabeus of whom the Scripture speaks, we all may and ought to write: "We are not better than our fathers."

Neither the evidence of our vocation, nor the fervor with which we are devoting ourselves to Jesus, nor our past dispositions, nor our present dispositions, nor that incalculable chain of graces—happy, golden chain, with which the Divine Mercy inter-

weaves our whole life—nothing completely shields us from the dangers we carry within us, even when not running after the more dangerous ones without. Fervent to-day, we may to-morrow sadden the jealous heart of our divine Spouse by some infidelity, slight, it is true, in itself, but grave when considered in reference to Him against whom we dared to commit it; and this little infidelity predisposes us to greater ones. To-day, filled with holy ardor, we carry the yoke of the Lord so willingly that He seems to carry us Himself. But to-morrow we scarcely drag it; so true is it that vain man changes *like the moon*, and only in heaven will vicissitudes end.

But whither am I drifting? Whither does my zeal bear me? I wish only to encourage the practice of mortification, assured that we find everything in it—perseverance, joy of the Holy Spirit, the happiness of the soul, even the sweet flower of that politeness which has for me so many charms, and with which we may profusely embellish our heavenly crown.

Mortification is, indeed, the cross that must, in following the divine Master, be

borne constantly, patiently, and generously, under pain of being forever separated from Him. It is a cross upon which are nailed all the members of the body and all the faculties of the soul, that they may no longer move but by the Spirit and the will of Jesus. It is of this cross the great Apostle spoke, when he said: "Christo confixus sum cruci": With Christ I am nailed to the cross. It is the laying off of the old man and the putting on of the new, an emptying of the heart of self to fill it with God, a combat against natural inclinations, to regulate all their tendencies according to the light of faith and reason. It is a perpetual sacrifice to God of self-love, of judgment, of mind, of heart, and body. It is a holocaust, the sweet odor of which ought to rise incessantly to heaven to proclaim the sovereign dominion of God over all His creatures. It is the immolation of self-love on the altar of humility, of our own judgment on the altar of obedience, of our own will to the will of superiors. It is, for the sight, the privation of all that is useless; for the tongue, the care to check its longing to talk, which may

be very emphatically pronounced the proclivity of simpletons. Mortification substitutes for levity the spirit of recollection. Mortification is for the mouth fasting and penance, and for all the members of the body the retrenchment of ease and the conveniences of life. In fine, the domain of mortification extends to all that we are, both within and without. It is the life of Jesus. It is the life of the saints. It is ours, if our interior accords with the exterior, if we are such as we are thought to be, such as the world regards us. Let us ask ourselves, are we such as others think us? Are we such as the austerities of our life represent us?

O Jesus, we are in reality only what we are before Thee! People may believe us saints, but that is nothing; we may work miracles, but that is nothing; we may speak the language of the angels, but that is nothing; we may prolong our fasts like Stylites, but that is nothing; we may shed our blood drop by drop, but that is nothing; no, nothing in comparison with one act of true mortification; that is to say, of mortification at the same time inte-

rior and exterior. After all, our brother the *body* has not done so much evil as our sister the *soul*. It is she upon whom Divine Justice has claims. The end of corporal austerities is to lead to the abnegation of the heart; and one act of true self-renunciation is of more real value than martyrdom, if in the latter be found a breath of self-will. Self-will! the name of a most detestable thing, but which explains the greater part of the discourtesy from which communities, even the most edifying and holy, must sometimes suffer. I refuse to my superiors the attention consonant with their dignity—behold self-will, immortification, impoliteness. When ill I fatigue my charitable infirmarian by my refusals to comply with her wishes, by my lamentations and tears; if I am permitted to wait a little longer than I think proper, I welcome her with reproaches—again, self-will, immortification, incivility. In the recreations, I obstinately maintain my opinion; I know not how to repress a flash of sarcastic wit; proud of belonging to a family somewhat more distinguished than others, I regard my companions as beneath

me—self-will, immortification, impoliteness.

In the distribution of certain articles, I prefer what is best, and am never satisfied with the most successful efforts of the cook—self-will, immortification, incivility. I urgently ask for and expect to retain as my own such a cell, such a place in the choir or refectory, such a book, and even such a seat—self-will, immortification, impoliteness.

I avoid such and such sisters for whom I feel less attraction than others, and without fearing to wound them—or, to speak better, to wound common charity—I affect particular friendship for others—self-will, immortification, incivility.

I pause. From the intimate knowledge experience gives of the human heart, I feel how much I could enlarge on the above; for all hearts resemble one another more or less, since the devil spoiled God's work by casting into it his own venom. But, happily, I shall say with the apostles: "The grace of Jesus Christ has superabounded where sin had abounded."

Mortification has for its aim to second

10 *Courtesy, Daughter of Mortification.*

the action of that vivifying grace which wishes to regenerate in us all that is evil. Never, then, give up this precious instrument of which we have need every day to prune the tree of our sanctity. The leaves grow apace, but the fruit is scarce. The more mortified we shall be, the more polite we shall be; and religious politeness will render us more and more worthy of the pious companionship in which we have the happiness of living.

## CHAPTER XII.

### POLITENESS THE SPLENDOR OF CHARITY.

WE have reached our third lesson. The first well practised would suffice to destroy in a religious community one-third of the incivilities that may possibly mar its perfect harmony; the second will cause another third to disappear; and the third, if the divine Jesus engraves it in our soul, will end by embalming us with the sweet perfume of religious politeness, that never spoils anything, but does good to all around.

I am about to speak of charity, as of a principle from which flow the dignity and sanctity of our vocation. Never was subject more worthy of serious attention.

The less advice a superior gives, the better will it be kept; the less he speaks, the more powerfully God acts. He has need of but two or three words, since, ac-

cording to St. Bonaventure, the most august Virgin Mary, as related in the Gospel, spoke only seven. But what words they were, and how full of life!

Let us imitate St. John, who, in the last years of his life as apostle and evangelist, repeated no other word than this, which he had read in the Sacred Heart of Jesus: "Charity, charity, love one another." And if its repetition wearies us, as it did the disciples of the loving apostle, let us add with him: "It is the precept of the Lord: if fulfilled, it is sufficient."

Yes, it suffices. If we love our neighbor, we shall never wish to do anything nor say anything that could possibly displease him.

What, in truth, is Christian and religious politeness, if not the rays, the sweet splendor of charity? Now, the sun can never appear on the horizon without rejoicing nature with the brilliancy of his vivifying light. And so with religious politeness. The more we have of it, the more charitable we shall be; the less polite we are, the more reason we shall have to suspect that charity has grown cold in our soul.

The more charitable we are, the more polite we shall be. The virtues go hand in hand. We cannot fail in the moral without failing in the theological also. It is the order established by our good Master, when He declared that we shall be treated by the just Judge in the same way in which we shall have treated others, and that He will regard as done to Himself what we shall have done to the least of our brethren.

Let us once more descend into the sanctuary of our conscience, and into which, alas! we go more rarely than into the material sanctuary, because, perhaps, we find there less to gratify our sensitive nature. I proceed under the form of aphorisms; but after them must follow the application.

“Charity is patient.”—I possess it not, O my God, since I am so uncivil as not to be able to suffer a word of contradiction.

“Charity is sweet and kind.”—I possess it not, O Jesus, since I forget Thy divine words: “If they ask for your coat, give also your cloak; if they invite you to walk ten steps, consent to go two miles.”

“Charity is not envious.”—Have I this

virtue, when I consider the praise given to others as something taken from myself?

“Charity is not bold and precipitate.”—I possess it not, O my God, since I push impoliteness so far as to judge and compassionate myself as if my superiors spared me less than they do others.

“Charity is not puffed up.”—I possess it not, dear Lord, since I keep no account of the advice that Thou givest me on every page of the Holy Book: “Humble thyself in all things.”

“Charity is not ambitious.”—I possess it not, O Jesus, since I forget Thy counsel: “When you are invited to a wedding, always take the last place.”

“Charity seeks not its own.”—Can I possess it, my God, when I seek the best of everything in clothing, cells, books, food?

“Charity beareth all things.”—I possess it not, O Jesus, since I notice so sharply every little word that escapes from others, but in which the heart had no share.

“Charity is not provoked to anger.”—I have it not, Lord, since I reply to my superiors or to my equals in a sharp and unmeasured style.

“Charity thinketh no evil.”—I have it not, O my God, if I am one of those reserved, restless, and suspicious characters who think they often see in things or words the most inoffensive, a shadow of the contrary, or a conniving at making them suffer.

“Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth.”—I have it not, dear Jesus, since I wear as satisfied an air when a lesson has been given to others, of which, if justice were done, I have much more need; or when I obstinately avert my eyes that I may not see the truth which condemns me.

“Charity endureth all things.”—I have it not, Lord, since I cannot hear the least censure without justifying myself, defending myself, exculpating myself, throwing the blame on others, or even revenging myself by words little in conformity with Christian politeness.

“Charity believeth all things.”—I possess it not, O my God, when I imagine that others scoff at me, or that they would like to do so; when I allow this inward sentiment to appear; or when I contradict

even the most evident truths in a rude and imperious manner.

“Charity hopeth all things.”—I possess it not, O Jesus, when, being so unfortunate as to become superioress, I aim at acquiring by cleverness that which I ought to expect only from time and, above all, from prayer.

“Charity, in fine, suffereth all.”—I possess it not, Lord, since, solely occupied with my own sufferings, real or imaginary, I desire all to compassionate me, to divert me, and busy themselves with me, without my compassionating others, as if they were obliged to wait on me and I were under no obligation to them. But if I exhibit not, O my God, this effective charity by my deference, by my consideration, in short, by all the delicacy of religious politeness, what am I in Thy eyes, and what must I expect from Thee? Vainly I flatter myself that I have charity. If I cannot suffer a little humiliation, how could I endure a great one? If it costs me much to utter a sweet word, it will cost me more to perform some real service for my neighbor. I do not practise Thy two com-

mandments: "Never do to others what you would not wish that they should do to you. Do to others what you would wish them to do to you."

Let us at the feet of our divine Jesus, hidden in the august sacrament of His love, reflect upon what we have read. There He will tell us better than human words can do that we ought to despise nothing, neglect nothing, when there is question of charity; and that the least impoliteness in a religious is a failing against this beautiful virtue, an act unworthy even of our call to Christianity.

But what avail the words of men, if the divine Saviour does not Himself prepare the soil on which they fall? Let us implore Him to write Himself in the depths of our soul the words now under our gaze, and permit them to do some good to the followers of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### RELIGIOUS POLITENESS AT THE TRIBUNAL OF OUR OWN REASON.

WE are fully convinced of the incontestable advantages, and even the necessity of religious politeness. We have journeyed into the region of humility, mortification, and charity; and on our return, we have better understood the need we all have of the moral virtue which is united in so intimate a manner to the three great duties of our sublime vocation. The higher we are raised by grace, the more also should we annihilate ourselves before God and men. He alone is great; all my fellow-men are better than I. I am happy to be able to prove every day, by my politeness, my cordiality, my deference, on all occasions, how little I think of the things of this world. Disciple of a God crucified, I am a member closely united to a Head crowned

with thorns, and who, according to St. Paul, never sought His pleasure nor His consolations: "Christus non sibi placuit." I ought to blush as a sensual being unworthy of the holy habit I wear, if, at the expense of politeness, I think but of self; if I know not how to impose upon self, in view of God, the slight restraints sometimes necessary in order to defer to my companions as far as conscience permits.

Finally, charity, we are told, is the distinctive characteristic of the children of God, the incontestable sign by which we recognize His disciples. It ought particularly to be that of His true spouses; the soul, the life, the bond of all religious communities. I should be, then, very culpable, if, through contempt of religious politeness, I should break or even weaken the happy bonds which make of us all only one heart and one soul. I should be very unfortunate, if I, who cannot bear in those about me the slightest forgetfulness of the consideration I imagine my due, should ever permit myself to transgress the rights of others. If I so dared, should I not fear, O divine Jesus, Thou who alone hast the

right to judge others, that Thou wouldst one day address to me these terrible words: "Ex ore tuo te judico: I judge you by your own mouth"?

Every time we judge our companions we usurp a right that is not ours. Every time we condemn with that severity so out of place in the mouth of the poor and humble, we bear from that day our own condemnation; for the great Apostle says: "Who art thou that judgest, and why condemnest thou in others that which thou dost thyself?" Dreadful words, well calculated to penetrate us with holy fear! For example, we find that such or such a one fails in this or that particular; and a moment after, we ourselves, in respect to one or other of our companions, fall into the same incivility over which we have just been groaning: "Ex ore tuo te judico." "How dry that man is!" you say, and a moment after you answer a companion in a freezing manner: "Ex ore tuo te judico." "How sweet and gracious that other one is!"—and a moment after, happening to be called away, instead of leaving, as the saints did, a letter half-formed, a lever is necessary to raise you:

“*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” “How sharp this one is! A sweet word never escapes her lips”—and however little you yourself are contradicted, one never hears from your mouth but the gall of the dragon: “*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” “How hard is the head of that poor child! It is an anvil on which one must strike by repeating things to her, at least three times.” And we? Have our guides not exhausted themselves in telling us, though without, perhaps, convincing us, that the want of self-distrust is in this century the greatest plague of the young: “*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” “How difficult this one is to please! He is a hedgehog. One knows not how to take him.” And yet do we ever think that we, too, might justly be compared to a hedgehog or a mule? “*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” “How awkward that person is! Everything that she touches must be done over again.” And directly after delivering this judgment, we ourselves, going to arrange or rather to disarrange our little chapel, place the vases without regard to symmetry between candelabra whose triangular feet present here the point and there the side:

“*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” When this other good person is sick, one must be an angel to take care of him, so delicate is he; and next day, falling ill ourselves, we would make even an angel impatient: “*Ex ore tuo te judico.*” So true is it that God alone is just in His judgments, because He is essential sanctity. So true it is, that one rarely knows one’s self. We more easily see a mote in our neighbor’s eye than a beam in our own, although a true knowledge of self would make us avoid many imperfections, many faults, many regrets. So true it is, also, that religious politeness, daughter of charity, is, in the eyes of an impartial observer, the infallible thermometer of solid virtue.

Let us not say that, in renouncing the world, we have renounced all that it esteems, its pomps, its usages, its language, and its works. No, we have renounced what is bad and dangerous; but we have not resigned what it retains of good amid the shipwreck of the passions, what it inherited from God, namely, His holy religion. If the politeness to which we aspire consisted only of that series of cere-

monies, more or less harmonized with customs more or less fashionable, of which the world was lately so prodigal, our observation would perhaps be just; but our politeness does not belong to the world. Its source is in Christianity alone, which has happily impregnated with its divine balm all our social institutions. The world has learned its best rules of courtesy in the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion, which, according to the avowal of a Protestant philosopher, *is the highest school of respect*. Paganism was civilization, but civilization destitute of politeness. France was, and it still is, the most polished of nations, *because it is a kingdom established by bishops*, and in it faith lives by good works. When, then, we resolve to be consistent by being polite, far from us the idea of turning our eyes and thoughts to that Babylon whence the Lord has withdrawn us by a gratuitous effect of His infinite mercy. We must take from the world only what is not of it—what comes from God; what God commands us; what is absolutely necessary to correspond to His eternal designs of salvation and per-

fection; what the saints have done and recommended with remarkable insistence; what, in fine, is necessary to make our words accord with our works, our pretensions with our conduct.

Whatever may be the habitual calm that beams on our brow, the storm rages in our soul if it reproaches us with incivilities. Since we wish that others should think us polite, let us aim at being so in our deportment, in our conversation, at our meals, and in our whole religious bearing.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### RELIGIOUS DEPORTMENT PART OF THE POLITENESS OF THE CLOISTER.

How we love to see in a spouse of Jesus Christ that truly religious, quiet, graceful deportment, at the same time humble and dignified, grave and modest, which is a part of Christian politeness! As much as we detest in a person consecrated to God brusque manners, haughtiness, and domineering, incompatible with the meekness of the Lamb, so much do we love a happy mixture of humility, mortification, and charity. As we recoil frozen, as it were, before those countenances, surly, harsh, melancholy, or languishing, which dry up the heart, so does our heart dilate at the recollected, calm, and tranquil appearance of a truly religious soul. As a disorderly exterior is too often indicative of an ill-regulated soul, so do the deportment, car-

riage, and clothing generally indicate the state of a soul watchful over herself. In fine, as we regard only as a very ordinary person one whose deportment recalls but worldly defects, so does the sight of the rays of true virtue make one feel himself involuntarily struck with respect for God, who dwells in the religious soul as in His chosen tabernacle.

In the life of St. Clare we find that virginal modesty which sufficed to reveal what was passing in that great soul. "The mere appearance of the just is a lesson, a subject of consolation and of joy. In the saints all is admirable. Their actions, their words, even their deportment, bear upon them a character all their own, a character that cannot be counterfeited." They are, like the Ark of the Covenant, covered within and without with gold. They are a temple whose exterior grandeur announces the august mysteries consummated within. They are truly the salt of the earth. One cannot approach them without becoming better. Around them reigns, so to say, an atmosphere of virtue, which seizes upon and happily penetrates

one. The modesty of their eyes inspires chaste thoughts. The air of humility and sweetness which surrounds them elevates us on the wings of faith to the idea of what Jesus was when He said with ineffable tenderness: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart." The calm that shines on their brow indicates the interior peace they enjoy. The gravity of their walk, simple, easy, and natural, reveals the order that submission to the will of God has established in their soul. Wherever they go, or whatever they may do, one easily perceives that a supernatural principle animates them, even in the most common, most ordinary things.

Is there not in the exterior of the saintly a something that reflects their interior sentiments, their humility, modesty, gravity, meekness, and calmness? They are moderate in words, even in step, graceful in bearing, neat and decorous without affectation; in a word, all that one could wish to find in the servants of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, never neglect that which may be a subject of edification, and which will, assuredly, ever be one of the most ef-

ficacious means of salvation and personal perfection. If we neglect the exterior, our interior will become still less regular. Do we not read in ecclesiastical history that the great archbishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, expelled from his clergy an ecclesiastic whom he could reproach only with walking in an unmeasured pace? But how soon it became evident that the Spirit of the Lord had inspired this apparent severity! Yes, everything tells in a man—his soul, his body, his clothes, even the stains and rents. A soul that does not know how to observe the laws of politeness towards those around her will never avail anything before God. A body not restrained reveals an inconstant soul, and levity will be its product. One that turns the head from side to side at the least noise will soon possess a soul like a weather-vane. Another whose arms have no more rest than the semaphore will soon be a soul living only for excitement and agitation, so incompatible with the spirit of recollection which the service of God supposes. A step too slow and measured will soon conduct to spiritual indifference. A too

hurried step will soon affect the interior spirit, which can exist only with grave and moderate movements. A habit torn, disordered, stained, will lead the observer to fear, and rightly, that the soul will soon participate in this state of dilapidation and slovenliness. Oh, shocking carelessness, unworthy an honorable companion and, above all, of the court of the great King!

Let no one say that our pen exaggerates. Let no one rise up to defend such a person by alleging the beautiful virtue of simplicity, to which so many wrenches and strains are given. Let no one retort that mortification ought to be the life of a religious.

Slovenliness, the want of order, and lack of neatness, will always be faults more or less serious. Let us practise mortification as much as we will, but let us not think that we have a mission to make others practise it. St. Hilary did not wash his hair-shirt, but he lived in solitude. If we do not respect ourselves, at least let us respect the servants of Jesus Christ who are so good as to endure us among them, or let us go into a desert. When St. Magdalen went into the wilderness to pour out

the perfume of the holy balm of her virtues, God, according to a pious tradition, drove far from her the insects that might have troubled for an instant her ecstatic recollection.

## CHAPTER XV.

### DEPARTMENT REGULATED BY CATHOLIC TEACHING.

THE effects of modesty, as we read in the Book of Proverbs, are: the fear of God that it maintains in a soul; the truths that it draws to it; the high idea that it gives of the presence of the Lord and of eternal life.

“The child of Belial rolls his eyes from side to side, moves his feet and gesticulates with his hands; but the wisdom of the wise man,” says Ecclesiasticus, “shines in his countenance.” We detect the sensual man by his glance. “The fool raises his voice when he laughs,” says the same book, “but the wise man hardly laughs beyond his lips.” At the first glance, by the movement of the countenance we recognize the man. Again, Ecclesiasticus tells us that “the manner alone in which his garments

are arranged, his laugh, his walk, denote who and what manner of man he is." "I conjure you," said St. Paul, writing to the inhabitants of Corinth, the most dissolute city of Greece, "I conjure you by the modesty of Jesus Christ, let it appear that your bodies are living hosts, holy and worthy of God." "Let your modesty," said he to the Philippians, "be known to all men," on account of the sovereign respect that the presence of God exacts. "A virgin," he said elsewhere, "cannot suffer anything in her exterior, no more than in her interior, which places in her way the least obstacle to perfection." "Know you not," again addressing the Corinthians, "that your bodies are the members of Jesus Christ, and that your members are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" "Now," he continues, writing to the Galatians, "one of the principal fruits of the Spirit is modesty, which ought to shine in all your conduct." "Clothe yourself, then, with exemplary modesty," he wrote to the Colossians, "as suits the elect and the well-beloved of Jesus."

Speak in your turn, holy doctors of the

Church, and teach us what we ought to think of the Apostle St. Paul, or of those who would tax me with exaggeration; and if we can make so little account of what the Holy Spirit recommends to us in so formal and so oft-reiterated a manner.

“Let there be nothing in our exterior,” says St. Augustine, “not in harmony with the sanctity of our vocation and the edification we owe one another: our gait, the perfect adjustment of our habit, the various movements of our person,—let there be nothing in us that could wound the eyes of any one, but let all breathe holiness.” “Wherever the divine Master is found,” says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, “there also ought to be and, in fact, is found admirable modesty.” “Let your exterior,” adds St. Ambrose, “be perfectly composed and well regulated, without affectation or the least artifice; for nothing affected delights God.” Let us, then, correct most carefully all that there may be vicious in our nature. We should never run unless to avoid some danger or for some other legitimate reason; for to do so is not well-bred. Let us, however, guard against the opposite ex-

treme of a studied carriage. Let us not be as stiff as a statue. We must not swing our arms like a ventilator; make brusque movements of the shoulders; hold our head high with nose in the air, or crane our neck; but we should carry our head slightly and modestly bowed, as is becoming the servants of God. "Let all our steps," says St. Isidore of Pelusium, "be marked with the coin of good-breeding, and let there be in us nothing eager, nothing petulant, nothing brusque, nothing that savors of ignorance." "Never spit," says Clement of Alexandria, "nor blow your nose in a way that will give others annoyance. Let not your lips make a hissing and whistling sound. Never presume to sweep in any one's presence, no matter who it may be; pause as soon as you perceive any one coming. Do not rest sometimes on one foot, sometimes on the other. Do not at every moment change place and attitude, for that would be a mark of levity and inconstancy." "I conjure you, my brethren," exclaimed St. Bernard, speaking to men, "I conjure you, if you love Mary and if you wish to please her, endeavor to

imitate her remarkable exterior modesty. Preserve always a joyous, serene, open, tranquil countenance without embarrassment or constraint; in fine, acquire a certain air of sweetness and piety capable of gaining hearts and bringing them to God. If in the sound of the voice, in the countenance, and gestures, there should be nothing that breathes softness, much less should there be anything that betokens a lack of education, that savors of rusticity. St. Ignatius says: "Always hold your head erect without raising or lowering it much, and do not support it on your hand." St. Bonaventure had said before him: "Turn not lightly from one side to the other; but let your whole appearance breathe modesty and sweet simplicity!"

O my God! the spirit of faith gives to Thy saints precious lights, since they never regard with contempt or indifference the least ordinance whose fulfilment could give Thee an increase of glory, and merit for them a single new degree of grace and virtue. May we all taste and enjoy forever the sweetness of fruits cultivated for God alone!

## CHAPTER XVI.

### RELIGIOUS DEPARTMENT ACCORDING TO ST. BONAVENTURE.

RELIGIOUS deportment is, then, as we have seen, a very essential part of Christian politeness. To neglect it is to undermine the foundation of the whole edifice of monastic regularity; it is to forget the dignity of our vocation and the respect due to our pious companions; it is to disown the presence of God in which we live; it is to interrupt the perpetual sacrifice that we owe Him of our interior and exterior senses; it is to expose one's self soon to become as irregular in soul as in body.

The Seraphic Doctor was right when he applied himself with so much care and labor to form the exterior of his novices. We can straighten a tree still young; but later on it will sooner break than bend. "Let the novices," says St. Bonaventure,

in the book of his Institute, "never presume to trouble the beautiful order that ought to reign in a holy community even in the smallest things, for fear that by the least irregularity they draw upon themselves the remarks of others. If disorder is always blameworthy, it is singularly so in a religious society. They should repair with holy promptitude to all the community exercises; for, please God, may we never be able to make to a servant, to a servant of the Lord, this equally criminal and shameful reproach that, under pretext of some particular employment, he was negligent in the common observances, that he was the last to enter and the first to leave the choir. Such conduct is not only the evident indication of a dissipated and impatient soul, but it becomes by habit a great fault. Let novices ever be distinguished by edifying gravity, and an agreeable propriety in their dress. When the community is walking in regular order in the corridors or dormitories, let them, when the convenience of the place permits, take care not to go before on meeting them, but fall back with respectful deference;

since we cannot have too much veneration for our religious companions. The novices should not disturb others in their various employments by noise, by immoderate laughter, by importunate cries, by tricks, games, noisy exercise, or by any other incivilities of the kind. Let them never acquit themselves of any duty in presence of the community without having foreseen and considered it carefully. Let them remember never to enter the church but with sovereign respect; never to take a place in chapter but with profound humility; never to go to the refectory except in view of necessity; to be very quiet in the dormitory, and always to preserve modest gravity in their actions and conversation. When called by the sound of the bell, they should go with a step so grave and moderate as never to be suspected of precipitation or immodesty. Before entering the church, they shall wash their hands whenever decency requires it, and let them arrange their habits so religiously that no one can reproach them with negligence or irreverence in approaching the sanctuary. Whatever posture they may be obliged to

take, standing, sitting, or kneeling, let them be careful to display religious modesty, a certain grandeur of good-breeding mingled with gravity and respect; because this elegant composure of the body serves admirably to awaken devotion in the mind, and is the evident mark of the interior respect that we have for the things of God. Let the movements of the person and head be well regulated. Let the body be upright, the head a little lowered, the eyes cast down, the hands crossed on the breast, or covered in the sleeves of their habit. Let them control their movements in such a way that not a single sign of levity may be displayed, whether by turning the head from side to side, by looking at everything that passes, by rubbing the hands, by incessantly turning the leaves of a book, or by any other reprehensible childishness." So much for St. Bonaventure—and let me add: Happy the community in which these rules, simple, but at the same time elevated, are perfectly observed! They could say with good right, as formerly did the great Apostle: "*Spec-taculum facti sumus mundo, et angelis et*

hominibus:" "We have become a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels and to men."

The holy doctor continues: "Let the religious, in as far as they can, avoid annoying the community by hissing or whistling at their prayers. Let them, also, avoid the disgusting habit of loud coughing and spitting, yawning, and sighing aloud, for these are intolerable vulgarities. Let them take care not to move unnecessarily in their stalls, lift their chairs roughly, or be guilty of other incongruities of this kind. If the seats are portable, let them take pains to move them gently with their hands. Let them practise such modest custody of the eyes that no one can compare them to a stag of the forest, or to a rude peasant of the fields. Let them remember that the honor of the cloister demands in their whole conduct a decency of deportment corresponding to their holy state."

A little further on, the same saint continues: "The well-disciplined religious preserves everywhere and in all his actions as perfect order as possible, because

he is convinced that good order brings grace, which constitutes the joy of a well-balanced mind. He knows, besides, that it is the property of a weak mind not to observe due measure in his exterior conduct. Then, even when alone in our cells let us preserve as much regularity, respect, and modesty in our looks and behavior, as if we were in the company of some person that watches over our actions. The angels whom Heaven has charged with our guidance see distinctly all that we do there; and we ought to have a singular veneration for their presence as well as for that of God.

If a religious is necessitated to go into the dormitories while others are asleep, let him not walk in a bustling, noisy manner, but lightly and cautiously; for he would be highly reprehensible if, in closing a door, opening a cell, or arranging a bed, he should disturb, however little, those that are resting, praying, or studying. Even when in bed, the religious should observe a religious demeanor; and therefore he should always lie on his side. Let him never stretch his arms drowsily.

Let him arrange his habit with the greatest respect, remembering the posture of the dying Jesus on the cross. In all his actions one should be able to observe a certain air of holiness and religious propriety; for, although the slovenly lightly scoff at the care that orderly persons take, people of mind and uprightness always draw a just estimate between the poverty and humility that they love as Christian virtues and the negligence and filthiness that one ought to hate as most blameworthy. It is to the honor of a man in all conditions to fly disorder and to delight in religious propriety. In fine, let all remember that exterior deportment is a sensible proof of the interior state of the soul. Let all govern themselves on this point with such circumspection as to make them remarkable for modesty of eyes, regular movements, grave religious bearing, as is proper to persons who make profession of consummate sanctity; in short, only by this means, says St. Paul, can they make themselves all to all, can they be venerated as the true servants of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### SOME PRACTICAL DETAILS ON RELIGIOUS DEPARTMENT.

SUPERIORS ought to watch over the exterior of their subjects, and never suffer them to contract bad habits. They should see that in walking they are not mere automata, whose movements are measured with mathematical precision; that they have not a stiff and affected step; that they do not swing their arms or needlessly and incessantly move their lower limbs; that they do not carry themselves bent in the form of an arch; that they do not hang the head in an affected and indolent manner, nor raise it with impertinent haughtiness. Nor should they permit them to choose their seats when about to sit down, nor balance themselves first on one foot and then on the other, nor rest them on the rounds of the chairs, nor tap them on the

floor. Above all, recommend to them not to change their places without necessity, never to drag their seats, not to choose the place that suits them best; since, apart from the holy will of God, everything ought to be indifferent to the servants of Jesus Christ—heat and cold, this place or that, one chair or another.

As to the most noble part of the human body, we have already mentioned the principal defects to be avoided. Let us add that one ought never respond to questions by a sign of the head, still less testify indifference or contempt by a gesture of this kind. One ought never to raise the hands to the head, particularly at table, without pressing necessity. It is, too, a great breach of politeness to lean on the table, or on the arms of a chair when in company. The countenance of a servant of God ought never to betray severity, passion, sternness, nor levity; but at all times gayety, sweet and amiable serenity, which should never degenerate into anything indicative of lightness or dissipation of mind. For the rest, one ought to compose the countenance accord-

ing to circumstances and persons. It would, consequently, be out of place and insulting to assume a smiling air and a joyous tone when conversing with persons in sorrow, or to put on a solemn countenance, pensive or mysterious, in the society of those whose conversation turns on things agreeable or amusing. Even amid the greatest contradictions, we ought to preserve equality of countenance, and become sufficiently master of one's self as to meet sorrow and joy with moderation. With a certain class of persons, the expression of whose face changes at every instant, announcing sometimes gayety, sometimes ill-humor, melancholy, or fickleness, which proves that they are very far from possessing solid virtue, one should be very guarded. With persons of distinguished rank, we should try to repress excessive timidity, which often degenerates into awkwardness, closing the mouth, making the lips tremble, and embarrassing those with whom we speak.

From the face in general, let us pass to modesty of the eyes. They should always be mild, peaceful, and full of reserve. We

should never regard superiors, whether in dignity or age, with an air of ill-humor, nor look at them fixedly or sternly. Let us not imitate frivolous children, who glance vacantly here and there, never fixing their gaze on anything. Even under the pressure of some sorrow, we should not keep our eyes constantly lowered, nor assume a posture that marks dejection; but keep them sufficiently open to distinguish objects, not resting them long on any one, not rolling them rapidly, nor allowing them thoughtlessly to wander from object to object; in fine, it is impolite to look behind or above us, or to close one eye.

We should not cultivate the bad habit of biting the lips or the nails, which latter we should not suffer to grow too long. Some close their teeth in speaking, others speak from the throat, and others allow their volubility to confound their words, so that their hearers cannot catch the sense. When speaking, one should take a tone suited to the place in which he is and the persons to whom he addresses himself. If it is too high, it indicates boldness and insolence, whereas too low a tone betrays

excessive timidity. If it is sharp and rough, it bespeaks harshness of character unworthy a religious soul; and an effeminate mincing tone, full of affectation, is a certain sign of foolish vanity and a narrow mind.

They who lisp naturally should try to remedy the defect as much as possible by dwelling on the syllable they have most difficulty in pronouncing, particularly on the consonants that precede or follow the vowels. They who pronounce slowly and languidly, as if they could not open their mouth except to complain, are insipid. They who speak heavily, as if with a full mouth, are ridiculous. They who, in reciting the Divine Office, speak through the nose in a drawling, drowsy, or nasal voice, deserve a penance for the carelessness that begets the fault. The pronunciation in the choir as elsewhere, and more than elsewhere, ought always to be studied, dignified, sweet, agreeable—never forced like that of the priests of Baal, who cried aloud to awaken their poor god. By reciting slowly, enunciating all the words distinctly, and marking the syllables that ought to

be accentuated, one learns to pronounce correctly. In fine, the conversation of persons who speak the language in all its purity contributes more than anything else to form a pronunciation worthy of the sublimity of our vocation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### FURTHER DETAILS ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

JUDGE of the sweet consolation I experienced yesterday, when N. N. wrote me of the happy change which is being effected.

“Since the day,” she tells me, “that M—— resolved to practise more exactly the virtue of politeness, her pious companions have rivalled one another in their zeal to imitate her. I can, indeed, say that for several days the silver has been changed into gold the purest. Your letters, read and re-read, have done the work of the crucible, which consumes the alloy. The dust has disappeared to give place to what is most delicate and refined in deportment, gait, carriage, conversation. When the dear children open their lips, it is only to exhale the most exquisite perfumes of urbanity and politeness.”

This is certainly an encouragement to

treat at greater length so important a matter.

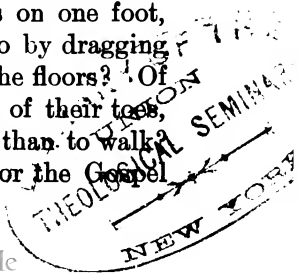
Speaking of religious discipline in my last letters, I thought I had exhausted the subject, when suddenly I remembered that there are always some of whom it is necessary to make to God, on the altar of politeness and according to the language of the great Apostle, "a holy host living and agreeable to His eyes."

Can there be anything ruder than to speak when yawning, to yawn affectedly or aloud; above all, to do so in the presence of those to whom we owe respect, as we do to our companions? If we must yawn, why not, at least, put the hand or the handkerchief to the mouth, that our weariness may not be observed? If we must cough, why not cover the mouth with the hand or handkerchief, or, if at table, with the napkin? When speaking to anyone, why approach so near as to be liable to spurt saliva into his face?

What shall we say of those who sit with their arms swinging, an attitude that imparts to them a silly, stupid, lackadaisical look? What of those who in walking sway

rapidly, with see-saw motion, under the pretext of comfort or relief? What of those who listen or speak with head on hand, elbow resting on table or chair? Of others who deliberately push or elbow out of their way whomsoever may be in it? or, in fine, of those that disperse with a shrug of the shoulders all who may be near them and whose presence causes restraint? What shall be said of those who present themselves with soiled and ink-stained hands? who crack their knuckles or nervously twist and turn them on all occasions?

Finally, what shall be said of those who sit with widely parted knees, and who even rest their elbows on them? Of others who carelessly extend their limbs, and even cross them? Of those who incessantly move their feet, beating with them the floor or whatever else may be within reach; who pose like parrots, sometimes on one foot, sometimes on the other; who by dragging their feet after them polish the floors? Of those who walk on the tips of their toes, and appear rather to dance than to walk? What of those who, rising for the Gospel



or holy communion, fear not by shuffling their feet to disturb the recollection of the faithful?

All these faults are highly unbecoming, all more or less vicious. Let us watch constantly over ourselves that we may not become addicted to any of them, however slight, for experience teaches the almost utter impossibility of correcting one's self of such habits. We frequently begin to recognize the deformity of our defects only when we can scarcely divest ourselves of them.

I should, perhaps, add here some advice on dress, to recommend in it decency, order, and propriety. But it seems to me that I have already touched somewhat upon these important points. Let it therefore suffice for me to observe that in worn garments of simple form and coarse material, but properly arranged, one is always fit to appear, whether in the community or in the assembly of the saints; while even with new habiliments, ungracefully adjusted, a person does not deserve to appear either before God or men.

As to mutual bows and salutations, I

cannot do better than refer you to the rules so full of politeness and wisdom inculcated by the customs of the saints. It is all sufficient to add that in saluting a superior you should never wait to be prevented by him.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### POLITENESS IN CONVERSATION.

It is very difficult to speak much and well. To speak much is an easy matter, as we every day experience. To speak in the wrong way is something still more common. To speak without judgment is the habitual fault of the young. To speak of everything is the mania of the ignorant. To speak without prudence is the greatest danger they have to fear who have been too soon elevated to an important post. To speak of self denotes pride, and, unfortunately, no one is more proud than he who does not think so. To speak of others, we have only to imitate the world, one-half of which is ever tearing the other half to pieces. To speak imprudently, we need only to yield to the first impulse. To speak foreign languages is much more easy than to speak one's own well. To speak

often is much more pleasant than to be silent. In a word, as it is easy to speak ill, so is it difficult to speak well. If we should desire anything in this world other than being ignored and reckoned of no account, it would be that on our humble tomb might one day be engraved the words of the Gospel relative to the deaf mute: "Et loquebatur recte: He spake well."

But how shall we set to work to merit from the divine Jesus this eulogium, the greatest that a devout soul could desire? What shall we do? First, recite frequently the prayer that the Church puts into the mouth of her ministers, when offering the incense with the vows of the faithful over the bread and wine which are going to be changed into the body and blood of our Saviour. They are: "Pone Domine," etc.: "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sin." In the second place, meditate on those words recited every day in the third Psalm of Vespers: "Blessed is he that shall order his words with judgment." In the third place, frequently recall to mind

these oracles: "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." "The good man draws good things from a good treasury, while the bad man draws evil things from his own treasury." "Every idle word that man shall utter he shall render an account of on the day of judgment; for you will be justified by your words or condemned by them." In the fourth place, let us remember what St. Bonaventure says of the Most Blessed Virgin. It is, finally, by carefully conforming to the important rules on religious politeness that we shall portray in our conduct the following articles:

I. According to the advice of the wise man, "We ought to weigh all our words with weights of gold." We should, then, souls consecrated to Jesus, esteem as precious every word that comes forth from our mouth. We should utter it only with reflection, and after thoughtful preparation.

II. As the Holy Spirit warns us that it is impossible to speak much without committing many faults, it would, perhaps, be better to speak too little than too much.

III. As it is said in the Book of Wisdom that it is the way of a fool to raise his voice

in laughing, we must avoid in our conversations loud bursts of prolonged and immoderate laughter.

IV. As lying, dissimulation, and duplicity are vices detestable in the eyes of God and men, they ought never to infect that mouth and tongue which so often receives the adorable body and blood of Jesus Christ. Such a mouth and tongue ought to be employed only in blessing and praising the Heavenly Father.

V. As all that may the least in the world wound sweet, holy charity ought to be banished, religious politeness not only counsels, but, moreover, commands us to act on this point with exquisite delicacy. We should constantly excuse those that have the misfortune to be criticised in our presence, and always view in the most favorable light whatever we may hear of them.

VI. As discussions between followers of the divine Master would be a serious disorder, politeness requires that we never contradict any one, unless obliged to do so through conscientious motives. Even then we must act discreetly, with the tact of the

charity of Jesus, which ought to unite all hearts by its golden threads.

VII. As we should not uselessly expose any one to commit even a slight imperfection, and as we ought never to make others do what we would not wish to do ourselves, politeness strictly forbids our recalling to our neighbors the faults, more or less wilful, which they have had the misfortune to commit, whether on the banks of the rivers of Babylon or in the true Promised Land of religion, or of making any allusion to the reproaches that may have been addressed to them, or the penances then imposed on them.

VIII. Only a simpleton plumes himself on accidental advantages; and, in the language of Holy Scripture, there is no one to be more pitied than a person poor and proud. Humility, as well as good taste, forbids our being proud of our relationship to such or such a personage, of speaking of the riches we have left, or the rare qualities we may positively possess. Since we are only the poor little ones of Jesus Christ, and possess, in reality, only what He gives us as an alms, let us be content with the

commendation of others, and never praise ourselves.

IX. As it is dangerous to speak of self even in disparaging terms, politeness rigorously forbids our speaking of ourselves in conversation, though it be to our own disadvantage. This is a ruse which self-love sometimes prefers even to flattery. It would be better to ignore self, to let God alone appear, rather than ostentatiously to seek contempt.

X. As we can never speak of what is unknown to us without the danger of saying something foolish, let us, with the great Apostle St. Paul, confine ourselves to knowing Jesus and Him crucified. Religious politeness as well as common sense orders us to be simple in our discourse, and to speak very little of mysticism, revelations, etc.

XI. Finally, as it is extremely dangerous to speak of the evil one, politeness strictly prohibits our entertaining others with dreams, apparitions, return of spirits, possessions, or other things of the kind calculated ever so little to trouble weak minds.

## CHAPTER XX.

### DEFECTS TO BE AVOIDED IN RELIGIOUS CON- VERSATION.

HAVE you ever remarked a fact that many seem to ignore? It is that all have two ears but only one tongue, and would to God that some had only half a one! Now, is there not in this unequal distribution of Divine Providence between the organs of hearing and that of speech a relation quite conformable to this sentence of Holy Scripture: "Let man be quick to hear, but slow to speak"?

If, then, we had two tongues, we could speak as much as we desire; but since our mill has only one fan, we must economize our words.

In the second place, I know not whether we always draw from this first principle, natural though it be, another inference as logical as it is important: the organ of

speech being weaker in youth than at a more advanced age, we ought to speak very little in order to spare it. However, oh, subject of great humiliation! the young are frequently the greatest talkers. One would say that volubility of speech is in an inverse ratio to maturity of judgment. The rawest recruits very frequently sustain a continued discharge of words, while the advanced in perfection speak least. They feel the need of sheltering themselves under the tent of recollection, and of weighing their words in the balance of the sanctuary.

Let us, in the third place, remark how silly it is habitually to make people repeat what they say. Some persons are always asking: "How? What did you say?" It is much to be desired that such necessity arose from continual union with Jesus, who is absorbing all their faculties. But if the cause is less noble, if those annoying questions are but the result of a bad habit of lightness or inattention of mind, let us avoid them as unworthy of our holy state.

In the fourth place, let us mention another breach of politeness to which a holy

soul once called my attention. While our worthy superiors are addressing us, we sometimes behold our companions distracted, speaking to one another, whispering into their ear, making signs of approbation or criticism, darting on such or such a one a scornful look, closing the right eye, opening the left, biting their lips. What shall I say? Now, could we ourselves long put up with all this? And, if not, should we not censure such incivilities?

Should we not lament hearing sometimes even the most holy, most adorable names of God, of Jesus, of Mary habitually and almost irreverently mingled in the most useless conversations? Let us never pronounce in this way names at sound of which all knees should bend in heaven, on earth, and in hell. The same observation holds good in regard to quotations from the Holy Scripture. To make use of them lightly is to profane them; and for this reason are biblical dramas, or other recreations of this kind in which becoming gravity is not observed, to be detested. The same applies to the sad custom that certain persons have

of saying on all occasions and without real interior sentiment: "May God be praised!" Say it as an ejaculation inspired by faith, but never say it as idle words.

Have we ever, in the bitterness of our soul, sufficiently deplored an abuse perhaps still more grievous in its consequences, namely, the unhappy custom of conversing upon the subject of confession and confessors? What! dare we mingle in ordinary conversations matters so serious! Dare we weigh the value of such or such advice given us in the holy tribunal! We criticise in form more or less severe the confessor's expressions, more or less suitable to the state of our soul! Do we know what motives he had in speaking thus? Was it not Jesus Christ Himself who addressed us by the mouth of His minister, since He has said: "He who hears you hears Me. He who despises you despises Me"? Again, even if the Lord should inspire the director of our soul not to address us any words, should we not be too grateful to him for charging his conscience with the heavy burden of an absolution which, perhaps, he can give

only with fear and trembling before God? Poor priests! You sacrifice yourselves for souls; you neglect nothing in order to unite yourselves intimately with Our Lord; you never mount the holy tribunal but as another Calvary; you would rather die there than utter a word not inspired by heaven; you guide souls as well as you can; sometimes you go even to those extreme limits of condescension beyond which lies mortal sin; you exhaust yourselves to give advice that is frequently ill-received; you employ meekness or sweetness when you might lawfully be severe. On leaving the sacred tribunal, you have need sometimes, after the example of the saints, to reassure yourselves that the balance ought always to incline towards mercy; and hardly have you departed before novices, mere children, begin to repeat, to interpret, to judge, criticise, and compare what you have said, what you have done—and this without the least respect for the secrecy of confession, of which you retain all the burden, all the responsibility. Such conduct is more than pitiful.

It is often necessary to repent having

spoken too much. Let us not worry others with useless questions; no one has the right to do so, whether superior or inferior. If some are, happily for them, kept in abnegation, it is not for us to make them practise it. Never interrupt those that are speaking, unless by doing so we may preserve charity. Let us never mingle in recreative conversations either the holy name of God or the least passage of Holy Scripture. Let us guard against words of criticism on our neighbor; for it is written that he who sows discord among brethren is cursed of God.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION ACCORDING TO ST. BONAVENTURE.

THIS great saint furnishes some new advice as to the manner in which we ought to speak.

“When we speak much,” said that admirable doctor, writing to the daughters of St. Clare his little treatise on religious perfection, some parts of which I have been so happy as to translate, “we generally commit many faults; but the good custom of speaking little preserves us from sin. Too many words are frequently the cause of very many sins, whether against God or the neighbor; while the love of silence maintains justice, that mysterious tree from which we collect the fruits of peace.”

Now, as peace is superlatively necessary

to cloistered virgins, it is necessary also that they should have this love. If they do not place on their mouth a guard full of solicitude, they will dissipate the entirely gratuitous gifts they once had and fall into a multitude of evils. You know how St. James speaks in his canonical epistle: "So the tongue also is indeed a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how small a fire, what a great wood it kindleth!" And again: "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity." Yes, it is by the tongue that come forth murmurings, dissensions, want of charity, divisions, contentions, derision, haughty words, boasting, revealing of secrets, threats, indiscreet promises, a multiplicity and lightness of words.

It is a great shame, a subject of profound confusion not to know how to place a guard upon one's mouth, not to regulate the tongue, whence proceed so many evils. In vain do religious plume themselves on possessing virtue, if they yield to an inordinate desire to talk. "If any one," says St. James, "thinks himself religious, not curbing his tongue as

with a bridle, his religion is vain and deceitful."

Oh, let us behold the mirror of virtues, the holy and Blessed Virgin Mary! What more proper to confound our lamentable readiness to speak of everybody, of everything? Ah! we are so inclined to multiply words, although silence is necessary in order to arrive at the perfection of virtue. Our conversation ought to be so precious, our lips so modest. We should speak but in pressing need. At least, we should observe this advice of St. Jerome: "The conversations of a virgin ought to be short and rare, more remarkable for prudence than for brilliancy or choice words." Even a pagan philosopher thus counselled his disciples: "To attain perfection," said he to them, "I wish you to speak little, to the point, and in a low voice." Listen, then, servants of Jesus, who speak so much, you who are so given to chattering and gossiping: tie a stone to your tongue, fasten that same tongue to your palate, put a finger on your lips, for it is a great shame for the servants of Jesus Christ to fail in this point. Speak, then, rarely and briefly,

with fear and prudence, and speak scarcely ever in your own defence. Cover your face with the veil of modesty ; sew your lips together with the precious thread of the rule, and let all your discourse be short, well weighed, useful, and humble.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### OTHER HINTS ON POLITENESS IN CONVERSATION.

HAVE you ever remarked the degeneracy of religious vocations? It is something fearful. Stature, head, health, virtue, all have visibly decreased in our century. Apart from some chosen souls, we have now but half-novices, who will soon become only quarter-religious.

All have been ruined from childhood by the want of a solid Christian education and by a thousand cares and enervating delicacies unknown in the past.

But if all is deteriorating around us, there are two things which visibly increase, namely, tongues and names. Tongues have lengthened to such a degree that a novice now utters in one day more words than our predecessors did during their whole novitiate; and, as to names, there is

not a postulant who does not wish to imitate certain kings in miniature, and appropriate to herself some thirty appellations. However, if the desire of bearing in religion a long string of complicated names, to the embarrassment of the celebrant at the ceremony of the clothing, and to their own embarrassment when there is question of writing their luxuriant litanies, one has much need to use his tongue skillfully in pronouncing them. Do not think that we habitually call a sister "Sister Mary Clare of St. Veronica of Jesus," as we should, since on the day of her sacrifice it was thought a duty to give her for protectors and models all the saints and mysteries possible. Do not think that we even call her "Sister Mary of St. Veronica." No, she is a victim that every one is at liberty to dispatch according to his taste. To say "Sister" would be too polite, since politeness has become a rare flower. To say "Sister de" would savor of nobility, and we wish to do away with royalty. To say "Sister St. Veronica" would be troublesome; so we abbreviate to the simple expression, "St. Veronica," and she is very

fortunate if we do not come for shortness to "Veronica." Now, I ask you, is this abuse bearable? It fits in with brevity, I believe, but it is hardly in keeping with politeness. It is a too free-and-easy way of dealing, and naturally shocks every one of delicate refinement.

This reminds me of some other advice which ought necessarily to have concluded my preceding letter.

Tell me what you would think of a spouse of Jesus. Christ who had the habit of making reports; of a religious who would not at once try to excuse those who should have the misfortune of being detracted in her presence; of a religious who would not in conversation avoid all injurious or humiliating comparisons? What should we think of one who would be so impolite or so stupid as to remark the physical defects of a person before another afflicted with some bodily deformity?

What should we think of a spouse of the meek and lowly Jesus who, instead of being willing to pass for ignorant, always wishes to vaunt her knowledge of everything respecting places, events, facts, and

fictions spoken of? What should we think of another who finds nothing good or praiseworthy excepting *her* Order, *her* rule, and *her* convent? What should we think of one who will use only long sentences to say what might have been expressed in a few words; of another who cannot speak to her companions without getting so close as to touch them or breathe in their face; of another who, when relating anything, envelops the principal subjects in so many incidents that she herself can scarcely find it? What should we think of a servant of God who never speaks but with a presumptuous air of confidence and self-sufficiency; of another who, having travelled a little, speaks on all occasions of the countries she has visited or which she pretends to have seen; of another who, instead of knowing how to suffer in silence, as much as prudence and simplicity permit, ventures to annoy others with her wearying complaints? What should we think of a virgin consecrated to the Lord who would dare to pronounce her own eulogium, or seem to court a silly compliment; of one who would be offended

at the praise given to others or who would depreciate it by odious restrictions; of another who, in giving something to any one, or in offering a little work to her superior, should be so indelicate as to display the gift she made or vaunt the merit of her work? What should we think of one who would always wish to know the why and the wherefore of everything that is counselled or commanded her; of one who, on receiving something very handsome, perhaps, would put on the air of esteeming it very lightly, or of condescending to look at it only from the height of her own grandeur? What should we think of another who would pay compliments, and this with so much affectation and emphasis as to render them insipid and ridiculous?

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### POLITENESS IN CONVERSATION.

“THE heart of fools,” says the wise man, “is in their mouth, and the mouths of the wise are in their hearts.” Deep words and worthy of meditation. If a man speaks only inutilities and foolishness, if he uses his tongue merely to utter words instead of sense, if he speaks more than he listens, if he puts innumerable questions on the most indifferent subjects and on those of which he has no right to know anything—am I not right in concluding that he is a light, superficial, and inconsistent character? Were a man never to open his mouth excepting to bestow eulogiums, to underrate others, or, instead of adding his own, to lessen by limitations the praise accorded to others, I should be right in considering him proud, vain, and jealous. If he never received the least contradiction except with injurious, cutting words or disdainful

tones, I should rightfully think or say, though groaning in the depths of my soul, that everything in his heart is opposed to the Spirit of Jesus, that divine spirit of humility, meekness, support, and charity, without which we are not even Christians, since a Christian ought to be another Jesus Christ. “*Christianus alter Christus.*” But can one that is not even a Christian, O divine Jesus, think and call himself a religious?

No, we are not Christians when we speak without reason and discretion. We are not Christians when we ridicule holy things, natural defects, reputation, or the merits of persons living or dead. We are not Christians when we know not how to repress a sarcasm, or when we aim at the unenviable reputation of a jeerer. To be truly Christian and religious is to put into constant practice the advice of the great Apostle. Let all your words be accompanied with grace and prudence, so that you may not utter one without knowing why and how you speak it.

And yet, how many there are in whom pride and stubbornness seem innate in con-

sequence of the bad education they have received. Fancy them speaking of themselves and to their own advantage. All that is given to others seems to be taken from them. If we address them in a single word, they respond in a phrase. If we say nothing to them, they sulk, they frown. If we seem to doubt their word, we wound their susceptibilities. If to try them we deprive them of the least thing, we unhinge them till their next confession. And what think you will these poor souls be when to the obligation of the Commandments they shall have added the still more serious one of the vows?

To be polite, as all persons consecrated to God ought to be through conscientious motives, we have still more need of observing the following advice: First, good-breeding rarely permits us to question persons of high rank. When, then, the Bishop, or our venerated Superior, or any other ecclesiastic confers upon us the honor of a visit, we ought not to question him except through necessity, and always in the most respectful expressions.

Secondly, there are some who at every

pause in their discourse ask their listeners: "Do you hear?" "Do you understand?" Nothing is more out of place than this. We should finish what we have to say, and, if the person whom we address does not hear or understand what we have said, we should simply and kindly repeat it. We should speak distinctly; for sometimes we are not heard, because we pronounce badly, or express ourselves in obscure terms.

Thirdly, politeness forbids us on entering a company to inform ourselves of what has been said in it. If, from ignorance of the subject, we cannot seize the thread of conversation, we should limit ourselves to seeking only a brief explanation, if we can do so without interrupting others; but if we foresee that the explanation may entail a wearisome or embarrassing repetition, let us be silent. Let us whose consecrated life should be a perpetual sacrifice wait till the occasion offers of informing ourselves without inconveniencing any one. It is the duty of those assembled, or rather of the one that presides, in a few words to inform the newly arrived of the subject of conversation.

Fourthly, it is very uncivil to ask another without absolute necessity what he has done or what he is about to do. The right to put such questions belongs to no one but superiors.

Fifthly, it is impolite to forestall a question or to interrupt others in order to parade one's facility in responding to everything. Such vanity betrays weak-mindedness.

Sixthly, one should not give his opinion in a full assembly, unless urged to do so; and even then he should comply with modesty, and in a tone devoid of sharpness or too great emphasis. If his opinion be contradicted by the majority, he should be silent and not defend it obstinately. If, on the contrary, it is thought just, correct, and prudent, he should quietly advance proofs of the same, shunning, however, every appearance of obstinacy or prejudice; for, as says the venerable Cæsar de Bus, "It is always far better to be the anvil than the hammer."

Seventhly, there are some characters in perpetual contradiction with the opinions of others. To rouse a dispute, it suffices

for them to see an opinion followed by the greater number. This inveterate inclination ought to be destroyed as soon as it manifests itself.

Eighthly, even should one be in the right, it is very important not to be obstinate in opinion. Supposing one correct in every particular, after simply expressing his opinion he should maintain unbroken silence if the dispute continues. It matters very little, after all, whether one is right or wrong; but it is sovereignly important before God for one to remember that he is a religious, which he would not be if he held in the least to his own ideas.

Ninthly, in communities even the best regulated, we sometimes find souls who cannot suffer the least charitable admonition. Persons tainted with this miserable defect should daily turn back to the alphabet of the religious life, whose first and last letters are humility. Woe to him who blushes at a reasonable correction. Such conduct would lead others to doubt of his virtue, and prevent them from speaking the truth to him in future. He will stagnate in his faults, if he always takes ill the re-

marks made for their correction. Oh, how much better for us is a charitable correction here than eternal reproaches hereafter!

Tenthly, but if it be a duty gratefully to receive the remarks inspired by the desire of our good, it would, on the other hand, be unpardonable rudeness in the servants of Jesus Christ not to employ all the skill of charity when obliged to contradict or correct others. Such a reply as: "That is not true!" "You lie!" or "You know not what you say," "You impose upon people"—displays unpardonable ignorance.

Eleventhly, surely one is deceived when he dares tax a religious with untruthfulness, or say he has lied; for how can one fancy a lie entering the house of God! Is it to become prevaricators that people renounce the world and promise to labor at their perfection? Lying and the religious profession are two things so incompatible that we must never suppose their alliance existing in the same heart. A lie in the mouth of a religious! We forbid it to little children in the most severe terms; and think

you that it would be possible for souls devoted to God to tell a single untruth! Surely they would not, for fear of attracting upon themselves the malediction of God, who says in Holy Scripture: "The mouth that lies kills itself." Think you that they are ignorant of what the saints have written on this subject? "It would be better to die than to tell a lie. It would be better to consent to the total destruction of the universe than to utter one falsehood. If, by an insignificant lie, we could prevent maladies, wars, famine, pestilence, and inundations, procure the extinction of the flames of purgatory, and put out the burning coals of hell, it would not be permitted to utter it!" O my God, preserve us from so great a fault! Rather crush us at once, overthrow our dwelling even to its foundations, encircle it with flames rather than that the slightest lie should enter. The poorest creature who dies of hunger at our doors—who had practised abnegation without having vowed it; humility, without knowing its name; mortification, without its glory; obedience, without questioning—will fare a thousand times better

than I, Lord, if he fears venial sin more than I do.

Twelfthly, this recalls another kind of incivility against which it is meet that we should be on our guard. It is not rare to hear some religious speaking of the sacrifices they made on quitting the world. They speak of them among themselves, and sometimes even in the presence of seculars. Now, to speak thus among themselves is foolishness; and among people of the world is a mockery. What! a consecrated soul to think he has done wonders in leaving the world, the corruption and dangers of which are only equalled by the misfortunes of which it is the theatre! Who would presume to compare the world with God? its agitation with the calm of the cloister? its cares with the holy liberty of a state in which God assumes all responsibility? its privations with those of a religious abode? its embarrassments with the holy disengagement of the cloistered life? its frightful responsibilities with the sweet possibility of never again depending on self? its dregs so full of bitterness with the tears so sweet of holy love?

its infectious dust with the pure gold of the religious life? its fragile and perishable goods with the riches of eternity? a mortal spouse with the immortal Spouse of souls? earth with heaven? the demon with God? No, no! Speak no more of *sacrifices*. The world itself would laugh at such expressions. Let us leave the word to poor worldlings, whose whole life is one of self-immolation, frequently without merit. We sacrifice nothing on leaving the world; on the contrary, O happy exchange! "O admirabile commercium!" we have given one for a hundred, a handful of earth for a precious stone. We gained all. Let us leave the word sacrifice to the mouth of the divine Master. He alone has the right to pronounce it, since He sacrificed all, His glory, His honor, His reputation, His graces, His mind, His Heart, His adorable body, to merit for us the sovereign happiness of the religious life. Let us speak no more of sufferings. They, too, belong to Jesus alone. Our lips ought never to open except in the language of humility and unlimited gratitude for His goodness in tolerating us in His service.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### SOME OTHER ADVICE.

ST. AMBROSE was right when he said that the birth of the servants of God is a good common to the whole Church. What happiness for me that St. Bonaventure has preceded me by six centuries! Above all, what an advantage for me that with one prophetic glance, six centuries before I took up the pen, he grasped and expressed what my own heart has longed to utter!

How, indeed, could I dare to say, had he himself not done it: "It is only the extravagant, the fools who dare maintain that no condescension, no courtesy is due to the neighbor; that the merit and qualities of others deserve no consideration; and that incivility and rudeness may pass for virtue in religion." Could I have spoken so forcibly? O glorious saint, what service you have rendered me by thus express-

ing my poor thoughts, by clothing them in your own style, so strong, so full of unction! Must we not love the seraphic doctor when he tells us truths like the following:

“Do not deceive yourselves, souls consecrated to the Lord. Never, or with difficulty, will you make the least progress in the society of your equals if you do not treat them with extreme respect. Let religious men and women anticipate one another in honor and service. Let them force themselves, apart from the fulfilment of their special ministry, to perform even the lowest services for their companions. Perfect humility is not satisfied with simply submitting to the orders of superiors. It esteems it a great honor to obey equals and inferiors; since it is persuaded that deference for equals is the bond of fraternal charity, and the sensible proof of a well-balanced mind and a very pure conscience. Let all joyfully render themselves the servants of one another, or rather the servants of every one, that, by this means, they may become *subject* to all men in the fear of God, as says the great Apostle; that, with-

out regard to their own interest, lending themselves ardently to all they think agreeable to the dear neighbor, they may make themselves all to all to gain all to God. When conversing among themselves, let them never give any one the least cause of vexation. Let them do for the happiness, peace, and love of all what they judge most expedient. What is there, in truth, more edifying than peace, more agreeable than union of hearts, more advantageous than to live socially, more excellent and more precious than charity? To live in good understanding with all one's surroundings is the strongest proof that a Christian can give of the uprightness of his mind and the purity of his conscience. If, then, it should ever happen that he become conscious of having offended any one, even lightly, whether by word or work, let him not sleep until he has humbly asked pardon and entirely repaired the injury he has done; for fear the party offended may virtuously forestall him and thus snatch the reward reserved for humility."

It does not suffice, however, merely to repair such injuries as attack civility. It

is necessary to prevent the neighbor in politeness; and it is for this the holy doctor adds: "Souls consecrated to the Lord ought to guard against these faults that often occur in secular conversation:

"The first is a certain facility of mind and natural inclination to find fault generally with that which we see in others and which is not conformable to our taste.

"The second is flattery, by means of which we treat ourselves and others with an affected complacency; we pass mutual compliments; we look at each other smilingly, and we permit ourselves a thousand other frivolities which end in nothing, because they do not emanate from a sincere heart.

"The third is the too good opinion we have of self, by virtue of which all that we think, all that we say, all that we do, all that we believe pleases us infinitely, and we even prefer it to every contrary opinion. The clever or far-fetched praises that we lavish on the productions of our own mind show only too clearly that we are deeply imbued with these sentiments. If sometimes we find one who abounds not in our

sense, we despise him as not possessed of good judgment; and, inebriated as we are with self-esteem, we exult in lauding our own actions. At other times, worse still, we feign humility. Then we sink below others. But we are acting falsely, since, by this artifice, we skilfully oblige our interlocutor at once to undertake our panegyric."

It is always the same principle that produces the same effects whatever may be the name given them. It is always egotism, vanity, self-love, which is the poisoned source whence, like muddy water, flows the want of courtesy that stamps our conversation. Happy they, who, well-grounded in humility, would exactly observe the advice on religious politeness which the amiable saint is about to give us!

"In order to conform to the sentiments of the Apostle," says he, "we must in our intercourse with the neighbor have as much charity in our heart as we display sweetness in our conversation. To whomsoever we may speak, whether religious or seculars, rich or poor, we ought to show ourselves perfect imitators of the meekness

of Jesus Christ. Our discourse ought not to have in it anything too severe; our answers ought to be tempered with humility, and exempt from bitterness, sharpness, impatience, and raillery. But if ever the necessity occurs in which we must speak to the advantage of our Order, we should guard against descending into details of the reasons for which we prefer it. We must praise it in general, without in any way comparing it with others, and without diminishing in anything the glory that is their due; since the most unjust and most injurious manner of praising a subject is to pretend to extol it by despising or lowering others. Preserve uprightness and discernment in your conversations, that you may never furnish matter in them little worthy of your holy state and more calculated to excite laughter than to edify those who hear them. Let no one ever be able to reproach you with not having entirely broken with the world, its manners, and ideas. Servants of God, let us always speak of God so as to put constantly in practice that counsel of St. Peter: 'If any one speaks, let it be always with the re-

spect which is due to the word of the Lord.' Let us accustom ourselves to speak humbly and in a low voice, because there are few defects less endurable in conversation than that of a voice sounding above all others. The speaker ought to be satisfied if his audience hears him."

Ah, would to God that the latter did not always understand! Would it not be better that I should be deaf and blind, rather than hear and see some persons falsely interpreting and criticising the intentions of superiors or incessantly complaining of the pretended sacrifices they impose upon them? Would it not be better to be deaf rather than to hear among the spouses of Jesus Christ a single idle word or murmur; a word of vanity or contention; since "it is better," says St. Gregory Nazianzen, "to be conquered by yielding sweetly, than to gain the victory by obstinately disputing"?

Let me point out one more defect, unknown, happily, among those that surround you. For twenty-six years, I have been connected with a great many monasteries. Dare I avow to you a pain experi-

enced more than once in those relations by which my soul is generally so edified? I have heard some religious who never found anything good but in their own Order say: "How well-bred our scholars, how well-informed and clever our novices, how wise our mothers, how perfect our monasteries!" I asked myself, whether humility in common is not of precept, as well as humility in private; whether true politeness consists only in vain formulas of *holy dilection* sanctioned by custom; whether it ought not rather to consist in the intimate feeling of one's own inferiority in the eyes of God and His Church?

Oh, may it never happen to us to pay this miserable tribute to human weakness! Let us never draw odious comparisons between our institute and others. Let us love our own as a mother who brought us forth, and who every day enriches us with many graces; but let us guard against that pharisaical spirit which may introduce itself into even the most holy communities when they lose sight of the strict rules of humility and religious politeness. Besides, who are we, to prefer ourselves to

any one? Is it because our house is, by an excessive goodness of God, a place of graces, an abode of peace, that it should be permitted us to do so? Oh, no; graces impose upon us the obligation of being more holy; but alas, they do not always render us such as we ought to be! Other communities, though having received much less, may be much more holy; and, consequently, we ought to cherish for each of them esteem and sovereign respect. We ought to venerate in them that mysterious robe of the Church which the Prophet King saw in prophetic vision enriched with admirable variety: "*circumdata varietate.*" As we should love Jesus whole and entire, we ought to love His sweetness in this institute, His charity in that, His zeal in this, His prayer in that. We should be too happy to have for our portion the humility and poverty of Jesus Christ, along with the title "Poor Ladies" and "Daughters Minor," given to us from the beginning. As to the communities of our holy Order, it is not this sort of respect and homage that we should pay in words and works. But are we not, besides, puffed

up by these unworthy comparisons of the religious spirit? A great many little people at the side of former saints, a multitude of degenerate children of great fathers, many weak imitators of the heroic virtues which embalmed St. Damien and the Portiuncula. O admirable monasteries, whose foundation was poverty, whose soil furnished beds, in whose unbroken silence one lost the power of speech, whose inhabitants peopled heaven, whose little cemetery, in which once reposed the blessed bodies of our first mothers, still preserves the sensible odor of their virtues! Let us, then, never prefer ourselves to any one, not even to the poor people of the world whom God has not chosen to introduce into the holy ark. Let us remember that many among them will be very much elevated above us when God will weigh on the one hand our holy engagements, and on the other the manner in which we have corresponded with them; on one side, the graces with which we have been inundated, on the other the little profit that we draw from them.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### POLITENESS AT MEALS.

It seems superfluous to treat of politeness at meals, since poor religious can scarcely fail in politeness regarding the things they reluctantly use.

When we humbly knocked at the door of the blessed monastery to which the Divine Mercy called us, we left our body on the threshold of the sacred inclosure. The worthy abbess offered us with her own hand the cross of the sweet Jesus, only asking of us our soul. Consider, she might have said to us in the words of St. Ambrose: "*Non corpora sumus, animæ sumus*: We are not bodies, we are souls." To this solemn warning we were eager to reply that we wished no longer to exist but in spirit and in heart. We embraced with ineffable tenderness the holy cross on which we wish to live and to die. Like

blessed Louise of Savoy under similar circumstances, we wrote: "At this moment all my vows are accomplished. With all my heart I bless God, who has granted me the grace so long desired." We were penetrated with it, and thenceforth might have been said of us what St. Basil the Great said of Samson: "Jejunium concepit, jejunium peperit, jejunium virum effecit: Conceived in abstinence, brought forth in abstinence, and by abstinence rendered strong."

Angels have sometimes appeared in human bodies; but we are conscious that ours are yet very real. We must, therefore, at regular periods, seat ourselves at table. But at the cost of what shame if we ignore the way in which a Christian, a religious, should take his repasts! What humiliation, if some very distinguished person coming to the monastery should remark anything bordering on impoliteness! It would, undoubtedly, be attributed to the heavenly absentmindedness to which a life altogether celestial has reduced us. Let us recall, though succinctly, the principal rules to be observed in this action, which,

animal as it is, ought to be referred to God.

These rules are reducible to two: At every repast observe the smallest rules of the holy *Customs*, and practise inviolably the most delicate propriety and religious charity. We need not speak of the first, since we have them continually under our eyes. Of the second we shall say only a word.

First, "A well-bred person of refined manners," said a Council of Milan, "never unfolds his napkin before persons of greater consideration. He always waits patiently until served, and politely manages in some way that others should be served before him."

Secondly, "A well-bred person," says St. Bonaventure, "never rests his arms, and still less his elbows, on the table, and he is very guarded not to assume a careless attitude."

Thirdly, "A polite person," says the same doctor, "never casts his eyes over the dishes presented to him, in order to choose the best, and never looks along the table to see what is to be served."

Fourthly, "A pious, recollected soul," says M. Fronson, "never turns his head from one side to the other to remark who are in the refectory, who enter, or who leave. He limits himself to observing whether anything be wanting to the person seated near him, and this that he may quietly notify those that serve."

Fifthly, "A polite person," according to St. Clement of Alexandria, "always eats slowly and not with the avidity of beasts. He never puts a second morsel to his mouth before the first is swallowed."

Sixthly, "A very well-bred person," says a pious author, "never looks at what he drinks, but keeps his eyes modestly lowered on the glass or bowl held in hand."

Seventhly, in taking soup, one ought to avoid quite filling the spoon, or taking too much into the mouth, thus causing difficulty of breathing. Never should he blow his breath over it. When the soup is too hot, it is better to wait till it cools.

Eighthly, it is rude, and even imprudent, to hold the fork, spoon, or knife upright in the hand; to gesticulate while grasping either one or the other; to raise a piece of

bread to the mouth with the knife; to hold the spoon in the left hand, or to force it into the mouth.

Ninthly, it would be exceedingly impolite to lick one's fingers, knife, spoon, or fork with the tongue; to touch the food or carry it to the mouth with the hand; or to clean the mouth with one's fingers.

We ought never to take salt with the fingers, or with the handle of the spoon or fork; it must be taken with the point of the knife wiped or with a salt-spoon.

Tenthly and lastly, be very careful, says politeness, never to nibble bread or other food, break nuts with the teeth, raise pears, apples, peaches, etc., to the mouth without previously dividing them with a knife.

Let us elevate our thoughts higher. Let us recall vividly the sentiments of faith that ought to preside over all our actions, even the least. "Whether you eat, or whether you drink," says the great Apostle, "do all for the glory of God." Necessity and conformity to the Divine Will ought to be the sole motives of an action which of itself is rather a subjection than a perfec-

tion of our nature. Never let us manifest the least contempt for those rules of politeness which should be sovereignly precious, even if they served only for penance. No self-seeking when we are about to take our place at table; no eagerness, no sensuality, no preference for such or such food, since duty alone ought to detain us in the refectory. Never let us complain on leaving the table either of the quality of the food, the mode of serving, or the quantity. Alas! so many are slaves to the etiquette of this world—and we refuse to subject ourselves to the rules that religious respect imposes upon us. Alas! many of the poor want bread in the midst of the abundance that surrounds them—and we seek our vain satisfaction! Alas! so many wretched mothers have nothing to give their children, who are, perhaps, dying of hunger at our very door—and we complain of sometimes experiencing the little privations of poverty! O God! what ignominy, if they who have made a vow of this virtue practise it less than those who cannot boast of having done so! Shame, if before or after the meal we think of anything else than of

thanking Thee, Lord, and humbling ourselves before Thee! Shame to religious who descend to the miserable enjoyments of a body of clay! Shame to them who flatter their body, destined soon to become a skeleton, and which they immolated on the day of their profession! Shame to them who miserably grovel on the earth like senseless animals, attending no more than they to that nourishment of which the divine Master spoke to His apostles, when He said: "Seek rather the imperishable food of the soul!" Shame to them who think more than they should of the grosser part of their being! Let everything in our reflections recall to us the idea of sacrifice. Let the discomfort or annoyance which comes to us from our fidelity to the least rules of politeness be one part of it. May the table-cloth be for us the winding-sheet in which impiety would wish to bury forever the mystical body of Jesus Christ! May that napkin remind us of the mysterious linen with which a pious woman wiped the bleeding face of the Son of God when being led to death! May that drink recall to us the gall and vinegar offered on Cal-

vary to the divine Jesus to quench His burning, dying thirst! Let the knife represent to us the dolorous Passion of the Lamb without spot, who, because He loved, opened not His mouth to complain. Let the fork and spoon represent to us the instruments employed in the figurative sacrifice of the Old Law. Let the salt recall to us the salt of wisdom, which we have allowed to lose its savor, although it should season all our words.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### CIVILITY AT REPASTS ACCORDING TO ST. BONAVENTURE.

ST. BONAVENTURE drew up for his fervent novices some rules relative to religious politeness at meals. He appears to have neglected nothing when there was question of God's glory and the perfection of souls consecrated to procure it. Let us, then, draw from the dust of the libraries one more of those venerable remains of a past that can never more return; for, since in the novitiates of the present day the sole aim is to infuse science, they have something else to do than occupy themselves with humility and politeness. Behold, then, how the seraphic doctor expresses himself.

“Religious,” he says, “have the honor to be of the number of the children of God. Whatever they do in the presence of others,

whether good or bad, turns to the praise or condemnation of religion. The public good, therefore, demands that, when eating at the community table, they should seat themselves modestly, and with quiet dignity.

“They should refrain, not only from those nervous movements that disquiet the whole body, but also guard against breathing so heavily as to be heard, for that would proclaim a mind without moderation and resolution. The eyes should be so well guarded that they should never behold what takes place in their vicinity; for it is contrary to good breeding to gaze around and scrutinize with silly curiosity the least details of what is passing at table. Let each individually guard his eyes with extreme modesty. Let all be attentive to God and the reading, remarking nothing precisely but what is offered them. They should preserve during the refectioin profound silence, since one of the most shameful reproaches that can be made to a religious is that of talking or whispering at table. Although the company of a talkative person is to be everywhere avoided, it

is during meals particularly that we must fly from his approaches, since the refectory is a sacred place.

“But this is not all. Let no one at table dare permit himself the least freedom that could savor of impoliteness or which could not be done with perfect good-breeding at any table. It would, therefore, be a veritable abuse to speak with the mouth full, or while holding a cup in the hand; to carry anything to the mouth with the knife; to drink with the mouth full; to soak a second time in one’s plate, glass, or in an egg a morsel that has first been bitten, because it is an excessively unclean proceeding to mix with meats what we have once touched with the teeth. It would be an abuse to handle with unclean hands the cup, knife, or other table-service; to thrust the thumb into a jug of water; to dip the fingers into a plate of soup; or, worse still, to use them as a spoon to eat vegetables. It is rude to blow over the drink poured into a cup, or over any other sort of food. It is rude to eject from the mouth to the plate with violent effort fish-bones, and worse, to crack with the teeth nuts which are to be served

to and eaten by others. It is the height of rudeness to cough or sneeze without adroitly turning the face from the table. It is rude to stretch arms or hands before the face of the persons seated at our side, in order to take salt or other things, for this would be to expose one's self to touch what they are eating either with the habit or sleeves. It is rude to lean or rest the loaf on the stomach or on the habit in order to cut a slice. It is rude to send something choice to your neighbor or neighbors during the community meal, or to feed the cats or birds in the refectory. These are liberties that ought, on no account, to be suffered. It is rude, in fine, to be so long eating that this tardiness may be a burden to the community; for the wise give this advice to the pious man—to finish his meals among the first, so as not to disturb the regular order of discipline.

“For the rest,” continues the same saint, with his spirit of foresight which extended to everything, “observe good-breeding and propriety in regard to the table, the napkins, the towels.” He wished us never to soil them by too frequently or uselessly

cleaning the knife or hands with them. They should never be used to polish the teeth. This would be failing in respect to others. We should refrain from injuring by imprudence or impoliteness that which is for the use of the whole community. As to bread, we ought to measure according to our needs the quantity necessary to take, so that few crumbs will remain after the meal; and these should be carefully collected or eaten, in accordance with the command given by Our Lord to His apostles to gather up the fragments of bread, for fear they might be lost. Furthermore, through a motive of consideration for the poor and in a spirit of mortification and temperance, one ought to deprive one's self, with as much good manners as merit, of a part of the things that are served. They who through indisposition or mortification do not eat ought to be very guarded against judging or condemning those whom they see eating with the benediction of God. According to the instruction of the Apostle, they ought to believe that he who eats in order to supply his wants eats in the sight of God, and that he who eats

not deprives himself of it to glorify the Lord in another manner. Finally, all the aforesaid rules ought to be exactly observed in the refectory; and if there are among them any that appear singular and, perhaps, hard or burdensome to observe they can nevertheless be easily put in practice if, in a spirit of charity, the members of the same body go hand in hand with their leader."

Who can say that St. Bonaventure had not a prophetic spirit when he traced these rules so full of wisdom and exactitude? He foresaw these deplorable times, in which the spirit of insubordination and independence, diffused in the very air we breathe, is insinuating itself into novitiates that call themselves the most regular. He foresaw these deplorable times in which, under pretext of liberty of spirit, they would make no account of the laws of civility and politeness. In too great a number of religious houses, under pretext of no longer touching the earth, they have freed themselves from all its duties; or, under the plea of spiritual infancy, they have ignored the first principles of refined edu-

cation. Under pretext of pleasing God alone they fear not to fail in courtesy towards their companions. Under a sham mortification, they satisfy themselves at the expense of others. Happy age, in which quite otherwise were understood the great duties of Christianity!—age in which the Bonaventures had charge of novitiates, in which the novices were Brothers Anthony of Padua, Thomas Aquinas, Bernardin and Ambrose of Siena;—age in which the glorious St. Clare directed from her bed of suffering and with the greatest ease fifty religious. Happy age, in which only a solemn silence reigned in the admirable solitude of St. Damien; in which St. Catharine of Bologna, intrusted with the care of eighty religious, still had time to compose her immortal works; in which one superior or superior-ess sufficed to govern thousands of monks or religious! Then they read few ordinances, but they practised them to the letter. Then superiors had to speak only by their example, and their least words, supported by the holiness of their lives, were received as oracles from heaven. This was the age

in which they would not have believed themselves religious had they voluntarily excused themselves from a single one of the rules of modesty and mutual subjection, which are nothing else than politeness. Then the choirs were places of recollection for the angels themselves, the refectory was a new cenacle, conversation a veritable school of mutual edification; the entire life was only a long exercise of obedience, abnegation, charity, and noble and affectionate kindness. Then fruit given to one religious passed from hand to hand as a mark of politeness, until it returned to him who had first offered the gift. Then they thought of self only to mortify it, of others only to oblige them at the expense of their own taste; in a word, the terms *religious* and *saints* were synonymous.

- Let us, in the narrow sphere in which we can exercise some influence, recall those times so glorious to God and so consoling to the Church. Let us attach the utmost importance to the rules of politeness. Let us neglect nothing, in order to inspire our pious companions with esteem for them.

Let us recall to them that the greatest geniuses have not regarded them as beneath their notice. Although sometimes tempted to attach but little importance to them, they fixed their eyes lovingly on that poor house of Nazareth, which ought in everything to symbolize our holy communities. O divine tableau! O spectacle worthy of the angels! O admirable Trinity of earth! Behold the divine Saviour seated at a poor table with the most Blessed Virgin and the glorious St. Joseph! What gravity, what humility, what sweetness, what modesty, what mysterious silence, what sobriety, what simple poverty, though proper and decent! What mutual respect and loving homage! It is almost palpable! Their nourishment consists principally in doing the will of the celestial Father. Thus they contemplate heaven. Heavenly minds turn their gaze from all that the world admires to admire only that which the world forgets. Nazareth, Nazareth, true Temple of the Divinity, in which are silently accomplished the grandest mysteries, be thou the model of every house! Spotless Virgin, who dwelt in it, may we imitate thee!

And thou, happy Spouse of so pure a Virgin, teach us to neglect nothing that can impart to us some resemblance with Him who was at the same time thy Son and thy Creator!

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### POLITENESS IN LETTERS.

ON this point I shall give as a fundamental rule, humility. Humility fits in everywhere, even to the teaching and practising of the least details of religious politeness. Without it one will never write letters fitted to stir the heart, while with it the least word will be highly seasoned with that sweet politeness which is the flavor of the religious life. Be proud, and you will write often, at length, and in a style which shall have only the name of *choice*; it will be strained, dry, far-fetched, base. Be humble, on the contrary, and diffident of yourself, as are all who know themselves, and you will write rarely, briefly, clearly, simply, purely, and with the heart rather than with the mind. Six qualities religious politeness recommends to us in an express manner, viz.: rarely,

briefly, clearly, cordially, simply, and correctly.

First, rarely. This is the happy character of epistolary communication that religious houses had before the most insignificant novices had formed so high an opinion of their own abilities as to believe that every letter of theirs would effect incalculable good. One feels tempted to say: "Do not write so much if you do not wish to be made game of. You write frequently to your relatives, and they do not honor you with a reply. Of this be sure: the kingdom of heaven consists less in words than in works. A simple and humble prayer converts more hearts than do all your fine letters."

The divine Jesus, in whom were all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, wrote rarely. During His three and thirty years, Jesus wrote only a few words in the sand, in which He pardoned the poor sinner; for the learned raise a doubt as to the authenticity of the letter that the divine Saviour is said to have written to Abgarus, King of Edessa. The most holy and most august Virgin Mary, the most

beautiful type of the religious life, she who would have been able to write things so admirable, never wrote a single line. The saintly and glorious Clare, the illustrious virgin of Assisi, after the example of her seraphic father, wrote only a very small number of letters. Why, then, do we by the multiplicity of our letters wish to indemnify ourselves for the solitude we have promised to keep? Let us love to be unknown and reckoned as nothing. Let us not go so frequently to busy ourselves with the world. We are so happy in having left it that we should avoid communication with it except when commanded thereto by obedience or charity.

Second, briefly, the direct consequence of the foregoing principle. We do not deserve, at least in words, that any one should occupy himself with us. Why, then, when we write do we so long detain our correspondent on the sheet of paper which we have had the bad taste to cover with our thoughts? Let us say what we have to say, but suppress all that could make us lose precious time, or uselessly fix our thoughts on our defects or our virtues. It may well

happen that we have some necessity to write, but we can hardly ever have reason to do so at great length. On one page, one can say a thousand things; and in twenty another may say nothing. Truth teaches that what exceeds *yes* or *no* ordinarily springs from a bad principle: "*Quod abundantius est, a malo est.*" We shall say as much of the length of the letters written by young novices. They proceed most frequently from self-love; and even should they not spring from such a source, they are, to say the least, only a loss of time. The value of time is the blood of a God. Ah, what subject of shame for us! Once we wrote in a brief, concise style—but now we have become insupportably tedious.

Third, clearly. Oh, what a pleasing quality is perspicuity! How sad to see it disappearing from epistolary writings! Apart from some rare exceptions, one vainly seeks it in letters that should be the most brilliant. It would seem that the writers are so wedded to themselves that they abhor speaking as their fellow-mortals do. Desiring to say one thing, they say

just the contrary; wishing to explain something, they become perplexed. They abound in dull phrases confusedly multiplied. It is a succession of commas, with no periods to permit one to breathe a little. We receive such letters, we read and re-read them, and all that we gain is a headache. The second perusal renders them even less clear than the first. Serious study is necessary, and yet one runs the risk of mistaking the writer's meaning. With a little humility we might avert from the unfortunate reader the danger of entangling himself in a labyrinth; for we could, at least, speak clearly. But we think all that drops from our fruitful pen perfect and admirable, and for this reason we wish assured to each of our precious documents the frame of a commentary. Is this endurable in the servants of God?

Fourth, cordiale, that is to say, a note of piety and sweet affection ought to reveal itself in the tone of every letter; that piety which, according to the language of the great Apostle, is useful to all; that sweetness which works wonders; that sincere affection which touches the

heart. But to touch hearts, one must be touched one's self. We must feel what we say. We must let the heart speak rather than the mind. It will cost self-love something to sacrifice such or such an idea, such or such an expression which would display intelligence, and this sacrifice is immense to a young writer; but in a letter one wishes to find only the expression of true sentiments. Apart from this, all else is nothing. It will be very easy to find elsewhere more correctly turned phrases and rounded periods. To attain this manner of writing, kind and piously affectionate, pains must be taken to contract the happy style and habit; but Divine Grace always rewards the least efforts one makes to second it, and a truly humble, cordial, pious style of writing is always appreciated. When, then, we recommend brevity, take care not to confound the brief with the dry and curt, for that, too, would be censurable incivility. We can always combine the two, cordiality and brevity, if we distrust self and follow our heart.

Behold the admirable letters of St. Clare, and those of her worthy sister,

**Agnes of Assisi.** When published for the first time they ravished all that read them. See also the letters of the Virgin of Carmel, or those of St. Jane Frances de Chantal. What simplicity, sweetness, and cordiality!

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

IF rarity, brevity, clearness, and cordiality are the indispensable characteristics of epistolary correspondence, simplicity appears to be, above all, necessary.

To whom, indeed, is it better suited than to religious? Far from us, therefore, that silly pretension of being esteemed clever! Far from us that contemptible mania, that craze which so many young people possess, for filling their four or eight pages with superfluous ideas, mystical or obscure terms, of which they themselves would with difficulty determine the sense; with long passages copied for the most part from the letters of Père de Condren, Père Surin, or other spiritual authors!

How many times has it not happened to us to receive similar mosaics, similar enigmas! It was self-love that composed

them, and God, who never fails to humble proud souls, always permits that what is their own and what is not should be discovered. When, then, we write let us speak our own language, simple and natural, as our words should be. Our letters will, perhaps, be less learned, but they will also be less pretentious and more our own. We have more need of knowing the sentiments of our correspondents than of reading leaflets taken from the best approved books.

But we deceive ourselves greatly when we confound the noble simplicity exacted by religious politeness with forgetfulness or contempt of the rules of style. Such negligence itself would be an incivility so much the more revolting as we ought to be more humble. Who would believe that humility even conduces to make us write in correct style? And yet thus it is. A humble soul, diffident of self, and, consequently, convinced of her own ignorance, doubts and reflects at every word that she writes, consults her grammar and dictionary as often as she has need to do so. The presumptuous soul, on the contrary, never

mistrusts herself, neither the capacity of her mind, nor the qualities of her heart, nor her style; for her, grammar and dictionary do not exist. Faults in grammar and orthography *swarm* in every one of her letters. God punishes her thus and abandons her to herself. She thought herself perfect, and others very soon perceive that she is nothing but a barbarian. Let us, then, write less. The world will exist very well without our letters. But one of our ruling passions is for writing; let us, then, in our missives, imitate God, who, after each of His stupendous works of creation, paused, says Holy Scripture, to see that it was good: "Et vidit Deus quod esset bonum." Let us distrust ourselves a little either before writing, or while writing, or after we have written; and let us comprehend, once for us, that a religious voluntarily despising the rules of grammar and of orthography is an impolite one; since in thus acting she insults those that she thinks to honor, and injures her own institute, by giving just reason to think that instruction and politeness are there neglected.

Let us make the following advice our own:

I. Never write except when there is reason to think that the divine Jesus requires it; refrain from speaking of self, and carefully avoid lengthiness, obscurity, repetitions, affectation and the least faults of diction.

II. Be even more careful in writing than in conversation. No matter to whom the communication is addressed, it should be faultless. For this we must acquire good habits and show respect to every one.

III. Avoid in letters addressed to a superior erasures, messages, and all that would not breathe of the profound respect that we owe him. St. Francis Xavier never wrote to his superior except on his knees.

IV. Conform to the old custom, which was to respond in general to all letters received. The more eagerness displayed in answering a letter, the more proof we give of humility and politeness.

V. When writing to a person of elevated dignity, we should guard against asking him to deliver messages, compliments, or

the like to any one. Such familiarity would be impolite.

VI. Always write on a whole sheet of paper. It is impolite to write a letter on a leaf, even when there is question only of a note. Such a proceeding can be tolerated only when addressing a person with whom one is very intimate, or conveying some order to a tradesman.

VII. In business letters, the date is always put at the head of the letter. When we write to an equal it is put indifferently at the beginning or at the end near the signature; but when we write to a superior, it is proper to put it at the end.

VIII. The margins, the space between the words *sir* or *madam*, are in proportion to the quality of the person and the respect that we owe him. In a familiar letter we need not leave any margin.

IX. It is polite to repeat sometimes in the body of the letter the word *sir* or *madam*, when the sentence is directly addressed to the person to whom we are writing.

X. If called upon to write in some necessity to a noble or distinguished per-

sonage, we should use his title only once at the beginning and again at the end. In the body of the letter, titles or dignities should not be mentioned, but simply *sir* or *madam*.

XI. Observe a similar course in writing to Church dignitaries, such as bishops. Speak of them twice as "your grace," or "my lord;" that is, at the beginning and at the conclusion.

XII. If the letter you write should end on too low a line of the page, it would be better to manage the writing in such a way as to reserve, before the formal conclusion, some lines for which the next page may be used. Politeness requires that these should not be fewer than two.

XIII. In writing to a superior, avoid such formalities as: "I have the honor to salute you," "I am, with profound esteem," or "I am, with deep consideration," etc., etc. These formulas are not sufficiently respectful, since the words *esteem* and *consideration* generally suggest superiority in the person that makes use of them.

XIV. As much as possible avoid *post-scripts*. There are some cases, indicated

by tact and prudence, which sometimes authorize their use in important letters. As a rule, they are in bad taste.

XV. All letters written to a superior or to a person of quality ought to be inclosed in an envelope.

XVI. Finally, all letters sent by post must be prepaid. However, since the introduction of the postage-stamp, mutual pre-payment is become a general usage. To tax an individual with carrying a letter would be a very great infraction of etiquette.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### RECAPITULATION AND CONCLUSION.

WE are near the end of our correspondence, which undoubtedly has lasted too long, but which is, however, still incomplete. Would that we, indeed, had given much salutary advice on politeness towards confessors, towards the poor of Jesus Christ, towards the people of whom we must make use! I might afterwards have traced the finished portrait of a polished religious, one perfectly polite, the counterpart of whom I should have found in St. Euphrasia of Egypt.

At the side of this rapturous picture, I might have drawn the hideous likeness of that coarse, uncivil follower of Christ who possessed all those characteristics that were for the saint the occasion of so many merits. I might also have recounted the tragic manner in which she herself was

punished. I might have spoken to you of the virtue of condescension, the sweet flower of which never spoils conversation even the most serious. I might have shown you in heaven, and even in the Catholic liturgy, which is made to its likeness, a model and reward of true politeness, such as I understand it and as I desire it to be understood and practised by all the followers of Jesus Christ. I might have—but one must know how to limit his desires, even the most legitimate. Discretion should prevail over all our works, and I am not ignorant of the words of the great Apostle: “All things are lawful to me, though not expedient: *Omnia mihi licent, sed non expediunt.*” However, before concluding, allow me to sum up in a few words the principal advice scattered throughout these pages. Let us constantly recall the recommendations of the saints and particularly those of our holy founders.

1. Let us form in the morning, with as much diffidence in ourselves as confidence in God, the firm resolution to practise in all things and towards all persons great cordiality and politeness.

2. Let us practise it universally towards all superiors. Never, therefore, any resistance, any murmurs, so unworthy of those who profess to follow Jesus Christ. Politeness towards superiors consists in being in their hands as soft wax, on which may be daily impressed the divine resemblance, which constitutes our only glory in this world, as it will be our happiness in eternity.

3. We will practise it indiscriminately towards all our companions, since the sweet charity of Jesus ought to unite all. For this reason, every time we meet one another we will make a salutation inspired by the heart, which sees and loves in our companions Jesus living, acting, speaking, and suffering.

4. In our deportment, we will carefully avoid all that could possibly shock or inconvenience others; consequently, our neatness in clothing, in all that we use, in all that we do, should be irreproachable.

5. In walking, we will avoid slowness, precipitation, brusque and fitful manners, rudeness, affectation, artifice. We will not stoop nor sway from side to side. We will

not stand first on one foot and then on the other; we will not at every moment change our position; we will refrain from that sluggish and languid stretching of the arms and limbs which ordinarily proceeds from idleness and negligence.

6. In ascending or descending a stair-way, we will never take more than one step at a time. We will never run, at least not without some urgent motive; we should not drag our feet, nor raise them negligently; we should not walk with a loud and heavy tread; we should study to move lightly, merely to touch the earth with the tips of our toes.

7. We should not walk like mere machines, like full-sized puppets; we should avoid tossing the head, swinging the arms, shoulders, and body, all which movements the saints condemn.

8. We should never corrugate the forehead. We should always remember that the eyes are particularly the seat of religious modesty; therefore we should never fix our gaze on the countenance of persons of the opposite sex, never allow our eyes to wander around, keep them

neither too open nor too closed, but ordinarily a little lowered, without making too frequent or too sudden movements. We should always have a humble, mild, and respectful look.

9. We should constantly preserve a countenance serene, open, cheerful, peaceful, without restraint or constraint, for this imparts a certain expression of goodness, meekness, cordiality, and recollection, capable of gaining hearts and bringing them to God.

10. When the hands are unoccupied, they should ordinarily be concealed in the sleeves, and never be allowed to swing at the side or behind the back. They should never be raised to the face without pressing necessity, for everything like touching the person or scratching is prohibited by politeness.

11. When seated, it is not necessary that we should lean back in our chairs; still less should we lounge on the table at meals, cross the feet, or place one knee over the other.

12. Wherever we may happen to be, whether in public or private (God always

sees us), we should watch over our deportment, our posture, our countenance, our walk, in such a way that all may be proper, well regulated, pious, and breathe the sanctity of our state.

13. Through respect for the presence of God and the recollection of those around us, and especially out of consideration for the poor sick, we should avoid making the slightest noise in walking, in opening or shutting the windows and doors, or in arranging our rooms.

14. In conversation, we should be attentive to the presence of God. Under this salutary impression, which shows us Jesus Himself in each of our companions, we should, as a rule, speak neither too much nor too little; that is, we should be neither talkative nor taciturn. We should never interrupt others, never anticipate questions by precipitate answers, never contradict the opinions of others except when conscience makes it obligatory, and then only with due consideration and gentle civility.

15. We should avoid a boisterous use of the voice, and cease to speak when others manifest an inclination to do so; and we

should always allow the person of greater dignity to lead in conversation.

16. There are in the world persons who monopolize the conversation; others who, when either pleased or displeased, talk to themselves. These are habits that should be shunned by all the followers of the divine Master.

17. We should never make secret signs, never whisper into the ear, never put the hand to the mouth, turning the back of it to those near when talking to another; never address any one at too great a distance, and never make use of a tone impetuous, rudely dictatorial, passionate, sharp, bitter, or cutting.

18. We should fly as from a pestilential atmosphere every species of untruth, duplicity, flattery, self-love, egotism, criticism, and curiosity on the reasons others may have in hiding or tolerating certain things.

19. We should entertain ourselves neither with the defects of others nor with the news of the world; neither with comments on evil spirits and their various operations, apparitions, mysticism of too

extraordinary a nature, nor of pretended words spoken to the soul by God; nor should we speak of the nobility of our relations, the riches we have left in the world, the sacrifices we have made in quitting it; nor of the sacrifices we wish to make, nor of the dreams of the night, nor of learned questions of which our hearers are ignorant. Moreover, in speaking on some of the best subjects, we should avoid reverting to them too often; for, according to the beautiful maxim of St. Vincent de Paul: "All that is not necessary will be matter of a great reckoning."

20. We should not acquire the sorry habit of saying at every turn: "May God bless you!" We should never make, through levity or raillery, any application of the Holy Scripture; for such a practice might sometimes amount to profanation or even blasphemy.

21. We should never be eager to give our advice on every subject that arises, as if we were more capable of judging than others. When we speak, it should be with the simplicity, modesty, and reserve becoming the followers of Christ. We should

never ask a useless repetition of what has once been told us, and we should never try to make our opinion prevail over that of others.

22. We should observe to the letter that beautiful recommendation of the great St. Augustine: "Let all your words first pass over the file before reaching the tip of the tongue." If things are doubtful, we should not speak of them in a bold and decided manner. If our neighbor is of a different opinion, we should not give way to wrangling and a vain war of words, so out of place in the mouth of God's servants aspiring to His kingdom of peace. We should prefer being vanquished, and yield meekly rather than boldly and obstinately sustain our opinion.

23. Should we enter a room in which a conversation is going on, we should not be so rude or unmannerly as to interrupt it in order to inquire what has been said.

24. We should gradually accustom ourselves to speak always in a uniformly gentle tone, modest without affectation, cordial, religious, and worthy of a follower

of Jesus Christ. We should, for God's sake and through respect for our saintly companions, be choice in our style, language, pronunciation, avoiding all circumlocution and trivialities, which are not less contrary to religious dignity than to a good education.

25. Every time we violate any one of the foregoing articles, we should impose on ourselves a penance more or less severe, but sufficiently notable to be remembered.

26. As far as possible, we should never spit on the ground; never use our handkerchief in such a way as to disgust others; never suffer any noise with the lips in breathing, as do the ill-bred when wishing to testify their contempt. If engaged in sweeping, scrubbing, or like household labor, we should discontinue our work before a passer-by, whomsoever it may be. When any one enters our presence, we should, unless engaged in a formal public service, make a simple recognition or inclination of the head. As for sneezing, it should always be done as quietly as possible, and with care to use a handkerchief. It is an incivility to sneeze at table or at

any other ceremonious exercise. When it is done in our presence, we should simply turn our head aside.

27. We should avoid bursts of laughter, and even be on our guard against laughing too often and at nothing, as do the badly reared.

28. We should, likewise, avoid supporting ourselves without necessity by leaning against the walls or on the benches and chairs. It would be a great breach of politeness always to choose for one's self the best and most convenient seat, to rise without necessity when every one is seated, or to remain seated when others are standing.

29. We should never reply by a motion of the head to questions addressed to us by persons of elevated dignity, and we should be on our guard against testifying indifference or contempt by such a gesture. We should never permit ourselves the least grimace, and to show the teeth in laughing is considered very impolite.

30. We should avoid speaking with the teeth closed, or in a loud, drawling voice, confounding our words by our volu-

bility, affecting brusqueness or its contrary, speaking through the nose or sluggishly, as if the mouth were full. Our pronunciation should always be firm, clear, agreeable, and as correct as possible.

31. We should guard against elbowing any one, thrusting forward or back by a movement of the shoulders those at our side whose presence tortures or wearies us. We should refrain from rubbing the hands, cracking the joints, or constantly moving the fingers.

32. We should not imitate the ill-bred who, in order to indorse what they say, dart sheep's glances, bat the eyes, shake the head, protrude the tongue, or shrug the shoulders.

33. We should regard ourselves as ill-bred to the last degree, guilty of extreme impoliteness, were we, on remarking a fault in the choir or elsewhere, to call the attention of others to it by a facial contortion, a shrug of the shoulders, or any other sign; much less should we make any sound to that effect, as "Hem!" "Ha!" No well-bred person would permit himself such a liberty.

34. While loving above all others the religious Order to which the Divine Mercy has called us and the community which has deigned to receive us into its bosom, we should never speak but with respect and sincere affection of other institutes and other religious houses.

35. If praise be given, we should receive it modestly, referring all to the piety of our community; and if we relate the circumstance it should be with attention to the same virtue. Never should we be offended at its being bestowed upon others, nor should we complain of being forgotten. On the contrary, happy to be counted as nothing, a duty humility imposes upon us, we should rather add to than detract from the eulogiums made our neighbor.

36. We should never give any one, whether present or absent, unmerited praise, for fear of wounding the truth in our desire to extol others. We should be sovereignly grateful for the slightest service, interiorly acknowledging ourselves unworthy, and trying by prayer to acquit our debt of gratitude.

37. If presents are made, we should be on our guard against boasting of the gift; and in receiving one ourselves, however slight in value, we must take care not to despise it.

38. We should avoid affectation in paying compliments, never straying from the natural, if we wish to be agreeable; and we should take care not to make ourselves insipid and ridiculous by prolixity, emphasis, and pretension.

39. When we present or receive anything in an assembly, we should slightly incline. We should never, in giving or taking, reach across any one, without the greatest necessity, and then not without begging pardon.

40. In illness, we should refrain from fatiguing our companions and infirmarians with complaints or long recitals of our infirmities, than which there is nothing more trying to the most patient listener. We should receive with extreme humility and gratitude the least care bestowed upon us, for this even common civility exacts.

41. If, as it sometimes happens, several meet at a door, they should yield entrance

in the following order: if one is in charge, for instance, a superior, and the other is not, the latter yields to the former; if they are equals, that is to say, both dignitaries, or both exempt from such burdens, the younger should give place to the older in profession. Superiors always take the lead.

42. When walking several abreast, the middle place should be given to the most distinguished or important person. When there are only two, the more venerable, whether by age or position, takes the right. When the bishop, or any other prominent dignitary honors us with a visit, the superioress should take the left, yielding to him the right, and she should walk rather behind than in front, but without affectation. If the person in question is accompanied by any one of distinction, she will do the same; that is to say, she will keep her place at the left of the first. If, on the contrary, the personage is accompanied by one of ordinary rank, the superioress takes the right of the principal dignitary.

If there is question of receiving the

father-confessor or other ministers of God, we ought always to give place on meeting him at a door or in a narrow passage.

43. At meals and in epistolary correspondence, we should strictly observe the rules of propriety, modesty, and politeness laid down in the letters that treat of them.

May we be ever and constantly faithful to these suggestions under whatever form they have been presented!

Time passes with the rapidity of light. In ten or twenty years, that is to say, to-morrow, we shall, perhaps, re-peruse these letters, and then what regrets will be ours if we have not profited by them!

Alas, if we do not sufficiently respond to their charitable suggestions! We shall then sorrowfully exclaim: There is good reason for reproaching us with impoliteness. They would have rendered us worthy of our holy vocation, had we but followed them. Now that the chills of age have paralyzed our energies, it is too late to correct, too late to become polished! Let us prevent such regrets by ever remembering this wise saying of the devout St. Bernard: "Timeo Jesum transeuntem:

I fear lest Jesus will pass by ;” and if so many of the lessons contained in these letters are, as we think, graces merited by the blood of a God, let us try to make them available to His glory and our own happiness. In heaven the value of little things is estimated quite differently from what it is on earth.

**THE END.**

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